

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

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VEDIC PRAYERS

त्वमग्ने मनीषिणः सम्राजं चर्षणीनाम् ।
देवं मर्तास इन्धते समध्वरे ॥

—Rg Veda, 3.10.1

O Agni! You are the ruler of human beings. You are brilliant. All-knowing men invoke you in their sacrifices. They offer oblations to please you.

स घा यस्ते ददाशति समिधा जातवेदसे ।
सो अग्ने घत्ते सुवीर्यं स पुष्यति ॥

—Rg Veda, 3.10.3

O Agni! That sacrificer who offers proper oblations to you, who are the knower of everything, will have a brilliant and noble son. Moreover, he flourishes by acquiring immense wealth.

'Where's the Time?'

EDITORIAL

A Day at a Workplace

A monk told a businessman once: 'All of us should practise meditation, prayer, japa, etc. Whatever one is—a businessman, policeman, student, monk, journalist, teacher, an office-goer, academician—all *should* practice meditation. Why? Let alone the glory of spiritual enlightenment, meditation, prayer, etc also have "side-effects". They bring efficiency in work, increase memory power, peace, happiness, etc, strengthen us to face any situation, and so on. A person who meditates works far, far better than one who doesn't.' The businessman laughed and said: 'Sir, you don't know how busy we are! Where's the time for your meditation etc? Once in a while, on some festive occasion, we can visit temples, donate some money, and eat *prasād*. That's all we can do. Where's the time?' The monk remembered the story of Mr Harish at work.



Harish's office. Please be with Harish for an hour in his office. He will call you 'friend':

Harish says into the telephone: 'Give me that number.' He searches for a file. He telephones again: 'Got the number?' No. He angrily dumps the receiver down and begins to search for the file once again. Meanwhile he remembers the e-mail. '...Hmm, so many e-mails today. But where is that fellow's e-mail? Many are like Mr Meditation of our office. All responsibility on our shoulders, and these fellows sit and pretend to be yogis.' The phone rings. He angrily says something and bangs down the receiver. 'Some useless call,' he remarks. He rings the bell. The boy enters. 'Where's the file I had kept here?' The boy says: 'Sir ... I don't know, sir!' 'Good-for-nothing! Go, go!' The boy rushes out. 'Ah! I had called him to ask for some coffee. I forgot.' Harish rings the bell again. 'Sir?' 'Bring tea.' Harish picks up the telephone next. 'Did you get that number? No? Do you want to work or shall I

inform the boss about you?' The operator says something. Harish shouts: '*Try once again!* And dial that other person's number also.' Harish next pounces upon the e-mail. 'I forgot to write an important letter.' He again remembers the file: 'Where's the file? My table is a mess. Can I work in such a situation?' Harish remembers an appointment. He once again picks up the phone and says: 'Is anyone waiting for me?' He tells you: 'My friend, someone's waiting. I also have a meeting this afternoon. Oh, by the way, I haven't drafted the agenda yet. Where's the time? Let me call Mr Meditation.' Harish shouts: 'Hello, Mr Meditation! Will you help me?' Thus, in an hour, he is exhausted.

The calm-looking 'Mr Meditation' enters. 'You see, I am not getting that man's line. And I don't find that file! Mr Chopra's e-mail hasn't come! Moreover, someone is waiting for me! It's hell!' Mr Meditation says softly: 'Sir, about the file, you had given that to me to do the needful and send it away; I did that and had informed you also. Phone? That gentleman's number has changed, and you had noted it in your desk calendar. ... Here's that number. I shall link him up to you. ... That's done. Speak to him....' Next Mr Meditation calmly fishes out Mr Chopra's e-mail. All in minutes. Then he stands silently. Harish is appearing sheepish. He says: 'Okay, you may go. One more thing. Can't you draft the agenda for today's meeting? Do it, sir! Right? Ah, that fellow was waiting for me. I have no time. You do the talking with him for me. Tell him Harish is very busy. Where's the coffee or tea? These boys have become notorious! ... Please find out if the boy has prepared tea at all! And remember, I want the agenda by an hour's time.' Mr Meditation leaves as calmly as ever, unperturbed by the dig Harish repeatedly has at him.

There's No Time!

So this is how Harish works. You witnessed it [and perhaps had tea also!]. Harish and Mr Meditation are two extremes in any

workplace. While the one is confusion, the other is perfection. However, we don't say that all meditators are genuine. There are some really good-for-nothing employees who decorate themselves in devotees' attire, and read *Rāmāyana* or *Gītā* or *Bhāgavata* at the workplace all the time and show off that they are great meditators. They don't work. But there *are* some sincere souls who silently work their way through the confusion called the world. Their religiosity is hidden. Because they are sincere, whatever they do becomes successful. Their efficiency increases, their productivity increases, and they grow spiritually too. The practice of meditation is such: though meant for attaining perfection, meditation also brings with it numerous things as by products. But do we meditate? Some of us remark as the businessman did: 'Where's the time?'

The Problem of Want of Time

Though Harish is an extreme case of mismanagement, want of time is a genuine problem now. Today, every table in any office has a computer. We have computers everywhere. Life means the computer. Yet there is no time. So let's manage to find time.

1. The way we live: We all have 24 God-given hours in a day. If we set aside half of it for sleep and personal needs, we use the other half for our workplace (and recreation). Excepting for some really innovative jobs, excepting for some doctors, journalists, and a few other professionals who have an undecided schedule (though they too have free time) most of us have a routine lifestyle. There are times when we need to take important decisions, attend meetings, etc, no doubt. But most of our work is routine. After all, what new thing do we do every hour or every day all our life?

2. Our life is routine: So everything we do is routine. Going to our workplace is routine: excepting for those rare occasions when there is a *bandh* or a strike, we almost go the same way, by the same vehicle. Our cubicle or seat, our job, the people and things we have to deal with—almost all are the same. Our work

is a routine affair and may not always need much creativity. The decision-making of managers too becomes a routine, slowly. The great psychologist Eric Fromm wrote that even our recreation—going to a cinema, a park, a club, a hotel, or watching TV, or even eating—is routine. Nothing's new.

Routine also means experience. Those things which we do routinely need not consume much time as they did in the beginning. Experience must make us work faster and carefully too, so as to make us avoid repetitions. Moreover, excepting for some rare occasions and emergencies, perhaps there is no office where people are loaded with so much work that they can't do at all. Then why complain of want of time? There is a reason.

3. Happiness is our goal: We all want happiness, not work. Anything that brings us happiness is dear to us. Work doesn't bring joy. Had it brought joy, we wouldn't have desired entertainment at all. Rather, we would have worked and worked. For us, work is an objective thing, intended to bring us money, perks, and promotion. Out of the money, perks, etc, we want to enjoy the world. Since joy is our concern and not work, work becomes an obstacle in the way of enjoyment. So we keep on blaming our work and people, and say that we don't have time.

Harish in our incident is only wasting his time in the name of work. His life is a mess. Many of us are like Harish to some extent. It may appear shocking to some, but most of us spend time discussing lack of time! We shall see why.

How Do We Work?

1. The way we manage our time: How do we manage our time? This is where we should remember Harish of our story. Though most of us have a tight schedule, though most of us are busy, we *can* manage to make some free time. Let's keep a minute-to-minute diary for a week to check this statement of ours. We can see for ourselves how much time we really use for useful work, and how much is spent in trifles. We shall be surprised!

2. Sincerity is necessary: This calls for sincerity. No doubt we are sincere towards the work we do. But there must be sincerity towards ourselves also. Our lives are precious! We must be true and sincere towards ourselves. This is where work becomes subjective.

3. Life is not enjoyment only: Why do we work? 'To earn money!' And some idealists may think that they are serving the nation. But is that all? If we are working only to earn money, that is a very small ideal indeed. Even by earning money, how many are *really* happy? How many rich people are happy? How many big shots are swimming in joy? Few. Why, because this world can give only a certain amount of joy and not more; and nothing is permanent in this world. Let's remember the Gujarat tragedy; big cities were dust in seconds. Moreover, there's that superannuation or retirement one day! There will come a time when we shall all become old. Perhaps your children may not be interested in you. We should accept this fact.

4. Our potential is immense: Should we give up earning money? No. Of course we should earn money. But we should also know that life isn't merely earning money, eating, and enjoying fun; though they may be good, they also bring unending misery. One reason is, this world is suffering, and by our very nature we are not suited to such lives. Moreover, we simply can't work like coolies. When we do something, we should have the satisfaction of having done that. But in our routine work, we don't have any satisfaction at all. Since our work is mere drudgery or slavery, and since that work can't make us express our creativity, it becomes a terrible bondage. So the misery. Work-for-money and work-for-promotion culture is leading a very ordinary life. The 'somehow escape' ideal is self-defeating. Even animals live for their stomachs. But even they want freedom!

So we should be better. We have tremendous inspiration bubbling within. We have tremendous potentialities trying to burst out. Swami Vivekananda declared: 'Each soul is

potentially divine.' A small ideal will not bring out much potential. Therefore we need some higher goal to survive.

5. Please decide now: Suppose you love music; say, sitar. You are mad to hear sitar. But if there is some misery at home, the same music will make you miserable, and you will run away from it. So happiness and joy are not outside; they are in your mind. It is the mind that is either happy or sad. We think that we shall be happy by seeking a transfer or changing our job. But till we know the art of working, there can be no peace. It is our attitude that creates problems or brings happiness to us. Our attitude must change. So we should decide now: Do we want to continue with our present way of life—suffering, panting for time, struggling everywhere? Or do we want a better, calm, peaceful and happy life? If we want a better life, we should make our work artistic.

6. We must know the art of working: We must know the art of working and the art of living. Work is insensate (*jada*). It is like, say, a stone. A stone can't bring joy to you. But if a sculptor carves a beautiful image out of it, you will enjoy its beauty. So with work. We must know how to derive enjoyment from our work. We must be sculptors and not merely employees. This is the art of working. Artistic work will bring joy. When we do artistic work, all our complaints—'I don't have time,' 'Work is boring,' 'My boss is wicked,' 'I am heavily worked up; I am tired of all this,' 'I want a transfer' etc will evaporate into thin air. What is artistic work? Artistic work is deriving joy out of our work. How do we do that?

How Should We Work?

1. The first thing — goal should change: In our Upanishads, the sages have declared time and again: 'There is no happiness in the limited; happiness is only in the limitless, *na alpe sukham asti, bhūmaiva sukham*.' If our goals are limited—money, perks, promotion—there is no happiness. So the goal should change. Our only goal should be self-improvement. The rest will take care of itself!

2. Secondly, our work should be 'our work': We should have this much faith: what we deserve, we get. What we don't deserve, we don't get. God provides the most suitable thing to each one of us. So God has provided the best-suited work to us. Let's make it 'our work'. For any work to bring true satisfaction, it should become 'our work'. It may be boss's work. Maybe he is minting money by making us work. That is his problem; he'll face the consequences. For our peace and happiness, for our inner growth, work should become 'our work'. The attitude is most important.

3. Without identity, work is slavery: Work shouldn't be objective. It should be subjective, ie, our entire personality should become involved in it. Our 'I' should become fully involved in the work we do. It is then that there is earnestness, joy, peace, satisfaction, and love for work. If the personality is not involved, what's the fun in working? It is a slave's work, even though I may be the director of a big firm! So my perspective should change. For 'I' to become involved in my work, I must know what benefit 'my work' will bring to me. That is, I must work for myself.

4. From 'myself' to 'my Self': We are presently like the musk-deer, searching for peace elsewhere in vain. Peace is within us. So by 'myself' I don't mean my little self—the body and the mind. By 'myself' I mean my Self! This Self alone is the source of all peace and happiness. Such ideas may shock some of us. We may say that all this is not for us; that we can't be religious. You needn't have to be religious to work for your Self. If you want peace and happiness, you must be involved wholly in anything you do. The more we think we are working for our Self, the more peaceful shall we be. That's the art of working.

5. The question of time: Einstein said time is relative. If happiness is in the mind, time is also in the mind. If we control the mind, we can also 'control' time. Time is not an objective thing: it is a mental concept. Great emperors like King Janaka, King Ashoka and

others had time and worked for their Self. We know an industrialist who meditates regularly, and finds time even to write religious books. So there is time to work for our Self. To work for our Self, we should have only four ideals: (1) Involvement; (2) A higher goal in life; (3) Service orientation; and (4) Concentrated effort.

What Should Be Our Ideal?

1. Involvement: A saint remarked once: 'For a scientist, his work itself must become his pastime, leisure, work, entertainment, everything.' Our life should become a single whole. It should not be compartmental: so much time for work, so much for home, so much for fun, etc. What we love attracts our whole attention: Our work (ie, our life) should attract our whole attention. Such a thing can't happen now because we consider the work we do to be only a means of bread winning. So the attitude has to change. We should become fully involved in life so that it will become a means for bringing lasting happiness. This leads us to the second ideal.

2. Having a higher goal in life: Perfection is our goal. Limiting our ambitions and desires to our bodily joys and comforts, and the well-being of our family, is too narrow an approach. We have discussed this. By having a higher goal, we don't give up all these, but shall be enlightened citizens, that's all. Whether we know it or not, we are all born for a higher purpose. That higher purpose is attaining perfection. There is immense potentiality within each one of us. To bring that innate potentiality out is called the attainment of perfection. This should be our goal. In this way, we have an ideal, and we also have our work and home. How to correlate them? This leads us to the third ideal.

3. Service orientation: Many of us speak of yoga these days. Yoga means union: union of the finite with the infinite. We say yoga will improve our health. If done well, any yoga can improve our health, mental and physical. Our work should become yoga.

Service also is a yoga. Swami

Vivekananda has propounded the yoga of work for this age. Let our whole life be an act of service: this is what Swamiji meant. If we don't believe in God, all right, let us believe in the human being and in our own perfection within, and serve the human being selflessly. If we believe in God, so much the better. We can offer all the fruits of our work to Him and be free. Swami Vivekananda says that unselfish work is more paying. Let's not worry about pay; it *will* come. By converting our work into service—by doing the selfsame work as 'our work' without thinking of any ulterior benefit, we shall become masters of any situation and, in time, masters of ourselves. To become masters of ourselves is called the attainment of perfection.

Now, you may be sincere; but you must be efficient too. Service done haphazardly is bad. It should be done perfectly. Mere sincerity is not enough, we should know the art of working also. The ideal or goal is there, but the method or way should also be there. This leads us to meditation, prayer, etc.

4. Concentrated effort: We know the ideal. Our work is 'our work': we are doing it for self-improvement. But in spite of all this philosophy to back our efforts, we can't work better and better. Why? We lack concentration. The mind runs to the family, the troubles at home, the disputes around, etc.

To work properly, we need concentration. So we should meditate. Why not have a small room for meditation in your office itself? Every day, without fail, at least twice we should meditate. Says Swami Brahmananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna:

It is a mistake to think that sadhana cannot be practised for want of time. The real cause is the restlessness of the mind. Work and worship must go hand in hand. It is very good if one can devote oneself solely to spiritual practices. But how many can do it? ... As we see, even those who give up work and lead a retired life have to spend a good deal of their time in putting up thatches, cooking food, and doing other things.

Instead of working for yourself, work for the sake of the Lord. Know that all the work you have to do is Sri Ramakrishna's and Swami Vivekananda's. If you can work with this idea, your work will not bind you. On the other hand, it will improve you in every way: spiritually, morally, intellectually and physically.

For our lives to bring us real peace and satisfaction, we should practice meditation every day. Meditation makes us conscious of the life we are to lead. Meditation makes our mind calm. Meditation makes us perfect.

What Shall We Do Then?

First, let's have a great goal in life. The best goal is the attainment of perfection. This is a practical goal. Second, let us change our outlook towards work. We are all working in different capacities. Let our work become service for us. Then we shall see the joy springing from within. Third, let us try to practise concentration for better performance.

How to meditate? There are very good books on meditation, like *Meditation and Spiritual Life* by Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation According to the Monks of the Ramakrishna Order*, etc. Let's practise meditation every day. This is not becoming yogis, but practical, efficient, successful people. Meditation will lift us out of suffering and make us perfect. Meditation will make our mind one-pointed. This one-pointed mind will achieve wonders. Meditation will help us face any situation in life. There will be no problems, no tensions, no anxieties, etc. We shall see that we have ample time for such things soon!

When all is said and done, we still have some problems. How about them? So the fourth step. Let us consider every obstacle or hurdle as a test. By God's grace we can easily overcome challenges. This is the secret of management as well as time-management. Let's all lead a fuller, meaningful life. The more we go towards the real Self within, the greater will be our peace and joy. To attain that, exactly, is the purpose of our lives. □

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

Who Was an Ideal Muslim Ruler in India?

'Al 'Baranī's *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhi* and the *Fatāwa-i Jahāndāri* say that spiritual life was to be attained only through humility, poverty, and self-abasement, while pride, arrogance, and self-glorification were indispensable to a king. ... In the interests of propagating God's word, enforcing the faith of Muhammad, annihilating the enemies of the faith...Muslim *khalīfas* and kings were compelled to adopt the manners and customs of the great Iranian emperors. ... To Baranī, the ideal Muslim ruler could not satisfy his divine commission unless he deprived Hindus of all high government positions and forced the brāhmans (whom he compared with the Muslim '*ulamā*') into bankruptcy and social misery. Those who departed from orthodox Sunnism, notably the Ismā'ilīs and Muslim philosophers, were to be annihilated, so as to glorify Sunni Islam in India and make it the leading religion,' says S.A.A. Rizvi in *The Wonder That Was India* (cf. pp. 159-60).

The Lion Called Shivāji

Shāhji had been forced to serve the Ādil-shāhi ruler from 1636. But his young son, Shivāji, trained by his devout mother Jijābāi, rebelled. He became an eyesore to Ādil Shāh. Unable to capture the son, Ādil tortured the father. Ādil Shāh died on 4 November 1656. By then, Shivāji was a great force to reckon with. He had built the Pratāpgarh fort and strengthened himself day by day. Ādil's widow decided to take vigorous measures to put down Shivāji's power by capturing him alive or dead. For this purpose she sent Afzal Khān, promising him ample reward, and supplying him with a strong force. 'Afzal Khān, leaving his headquarters in September 1659, came sweeping against Shivāji, pulling down Hindu shrines on the way and plundering the prosperous regions of Shivāji's domains. Shivāji received full details of the Khān's atrocities through his spies and, unable to encounter the Khān in an open contest, took his residence at his new fort of Pratāpgarh....' Afzal Khān pitched his camp at Wai, about 25 miles east of Pratāpgarh. After several discussions between the two camps, the Khān, confident of his strength, agreed to meet Shivāji below the fort of Pratāpgarh in a specially erected tent with a decorated canopy. 'The meeting took place on the afternoon of Thursday, 10 November 1659. The Khān possessed a powerful body and felt confident of overcoming in a personal grip his small slim Marātha antagonist, twenty years his junior in age. Shivāji similarly took all precautions for meeting any eventuality. He wore an iron cuirass of chains under his vest, a metal cap over his skull, concealed under the turban with a long white flowing robe overall, having broad sleeves, covering a dagger in one hand and tiger-claws on the other. After receiving his mother's blessings, Shivāji boldly set forth on his dangerous venture to meet his antagonist. As he walked in, the Khān rose and, in his first embrace, gripped him tightly in his left arm and stabbed Shivāji with a dagger in the right hand.' Shivāji saved himself and, using his tiger-claws, ripped his enemy apart and brought him to the ground. The concealed Marāthā parties, at a given signal, rushed out of the woods and routed the Khān's armies both in the wild passes of the hills and in the plain of Wai. (Cf. *The Mughal Empire*, ed. R.C. Mazumdar, p. 258).

Martin Buber and the Advaitic Experience

DR ARVIND SHARMA

Martin Buber was an orthodox Jewish philosopher, who wrote I and Thou. He passed away in Jerusalem on 13 June 1965. Here's a critical study of his life and work by the eminent philosopher Dr Arvind Sharma, from McGill University, Canada. Dr Sharma has recently chaired the Infinity Foundation Visiting Professorship of Indic Studies at Harvard University.

I

The debate whether the absolutistic or the theistic religious experience represents the ultimate in religious experience is a time-honoured one within Hinduism. It is also well-known that Swami Vivekananda (and in his view Ramakrishna Paramahansa as well) was inclined to assign ultimacy to the absolutistic position.

The echoes of this controversy can also be heard outside of Hinduism. Although the absolutistic position does not stand out in as bold a relief in the religions of the West as in those of India, it is not totally unrepresented in the West. As a consequence, the issue of absolutistic versus theistic mystical experience has now assumed a global character with the advances in the comparative study of religion.

In this debate the role of Martin Buber (1878-1965) has been quite influential. His famous book, *I and Thou* (1923) established him as a distinguished advocate of the ultimacy of the theistic position. He distinguished the I-It relationship from the I-Thou relationship and assigned a superior position to the latter. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate that *personal rather than authentically mystical criterion* influenced his decision in this respect.

II

One must begin by emphasizing that ecstatic religious experience of a non-theistic kind was not unknown to Buber, which also took on an Advaitic dimension at times. It will become clear from the following account that Buber came to blame his involvement in ec-

static experience for the death of one of his acquaintances and hence turned away from it. It was this personal circumstance which, it seems, gave rise to a lasting prejudice in his mind against introvertive religious experiences. His account of this experience is so significant that it is reproduced below in toto:

In my earlier years the 'religious' was for me the exception. There were hours that were taken out of the course of things. From somewhere or other the firm crust of every day was pierced. Then the reliable permanence of appearances broke down; the attack which took place burst its law asunder. 'Religious experience' was the experience of an otherness that did not fit into the context of life. It could begin with something customary, with consideration of some familiar object, but which then became unexpectedly mysterious and uncanny, finally lighting the way into the lightning-pierced darkness of the mystery itself. But also, without any intermediate stage, time could be torn apart—first the firm world's structure, then the still firmer self-assurance flew apart and you were delivered to fullness. The 'religious' lifted you out. Over there now lay the accustomed existence with its affairs, but here illumination and ecstasy and rapture held without time or sequence. Thus our own being encompassed a life here and a life beyond, and there was no bond but the actual moment of the transition.

The illegitimacy of such a division of the temporal life, which is streaming to death and eternity and which only in fulfilling its temporality can be fulfilled in the face of these, was brought home to me by an everyday event, an event of judgement, judging with that sentence from closed lips and an unmoved glance such as the ongoing course of things loves to pronounce.

What happened was no more than that one

forenoon, after a morning of 'religious' enthusiasm, I had a visit from an unknown young man, without being there in spirit. I certainly did not fail to let the meeting be friendly, I did not treat him any more remissly than all his contemporaries who were in the habit of seeking me out about this time of day as an oracle that is ready to listen to reason. I conversed attentively and openly with him—only I omitted to guess the questions which he did not put. Later, not long after, I learned from one of his friends—he himself was no longer alive—the essential content of these questions; I learned that he had come to me not casually, but borne by destiny, not for a chat but for a decision. He had come to me; he had come in this hour. What do we expect when we are in despair and yet go to a man? Surely a presence by means of which we are told that nevertheless there is meaning.

Since then I have given up the 'religious' which is nothing but the exception, extraction, exaltation, ecstasy; or it has given me up. I possess nothing but the every day out of which I am never taken. The mystery is no longer disclosed, it has escaped or it has made its dwelling here where everything happens as it happens. I know no fullness but each mortal hour's fullness of claim and responsibility. Though far from being equal to it, yet I know that in the claim I am claimed and may respond in responsibility, and know who speaks and demands a response.

I do not know much more. If that is religion then it is just *everything*, simply all that is lived in its possibility of dialogue. Here is space also for religion's highest forms. As when you pray you do not thereby remove yourself from this life of yours but in your prayer refer your thought to it, even though it may be in order to yield it; so too in the unprecedented and surprising, when you are called upon from above, required, chosen, empowered, sent, you with this bit of mortal life are meant. This moment is not extracted from it, it rests on what has been and beckons to the remainder that has still to be lived. You are not swallowed up in a fullness without obligation, you are willed for the life of communion.¹

III

This opinion, in due course, came to con-

stitute a criterion for authentic mystical experience for Buber, so much so that when he did undergo a unitive religious experience he rejected it as false. As Sisirkumar Ghose points out in relation to Advaitic mysticism:

Such undifferentiated unity or union between the individual and the supreme Self is unacceptable to certain traditions and temperaments. The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber emphasized the 'I-Thou' relationship; 'All real living is meeting,' and one Thou cannot become It. But even his own 'unforgettable experience' of union he would explain as 'illusory.'²

IV

It is clear, therefore, that Martin Buber's evidence on the issue of Advaitic experience must be treated with considerable circumspection. It is well-known that Ramakrishna was prone to transic religious experiences. If the would-be Vivekananda had encountered him in a moment of extreme distress and finding him unresponsive killed himself or even dissociated himself from Ramakrishna, would that constitute adequate grounds for questioning that experience? It might say something about its ethical implications but it cannot, it would appear, be used to impugn the ontological status of the experience, as Buber mistakenly seems to conclude. Similarly, when Paul Brunton met Ramana Maharshi for the *first time*, the Maharshi was so mystically abstracted that Brunton got nothing out of the visit and left disappointed, somewhat like Buber's acquaintance. It was on the *second visit* he paid to the Maharshi, overcoming his earlier disappointment, that things clicked and he became a life-long disciple. It is difficult not to conclude that Buber's emotionally charged experience distorted his judgement regarding introvertive mystical experience in general and the Advaitic one in particular. □

1. *Meetings: Martin Buber*, ed. Maurice Friedman (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 45-6.

2. See entry under 'Religious Experience' in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1990), p. 630.

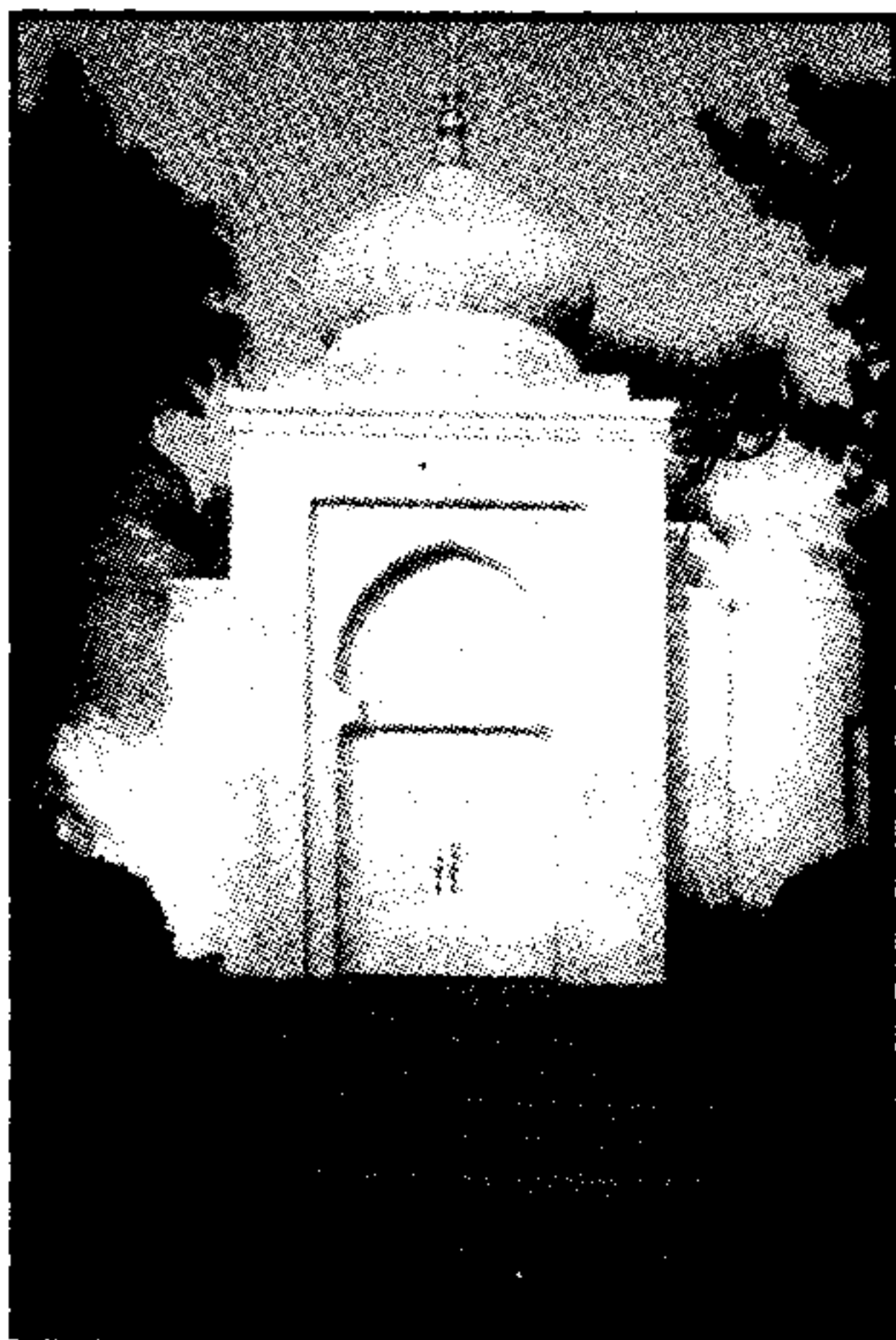
A Pilgrimage to the New World

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj is General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Revered Maharaj has been visiting different places on invitation to deliver lectures and promote the cause of Vedanta. He recently visited some of the Ramakrishna Order's centres in America. Upon repeated requests, he penned down his feelings and experiences of the tour. We hope our readers will greatly benefit from these beautiful memoirs. This is the fifth in the series.

HOLLYWOOD

On 15 May I took the flight to Denver. Swami Chetanananda saw me off at St Louis. Denver is a city in the sky—it is situated on a plateau 6000 ft above sea level. I touched



The Hollywood temple

down at 12.30 pm St Louis time and took the flight for Burbank (another airport for Los Angeles) at 11.45 am! Denver time is one hour behind St Louis time. Swami Sarvadevananda, returning from Dallas, joined me at Denver. On our flight to Burbank, we could discuss many things. Though the flight was for 2½ hours, we reached Burbank by 1.15 Pacific Time. So we could reach Hollywood Ashrama by 2 pm.

The USA has four time zones; rather five if we include Hawaii. So the West Coast is 3 hours behind the East Coast. Indian Standard Time is 9 hours ahead of New York and 12 hours ahead of Los Angeles! So for a visitor accustomed to a single time zone, as in India,

this constant change of time is confusing.

Hollywood is a suburb of Los Angeles and well known as the haven for film artists. Our centre here, the Vedanta Society of Southern California, was started in 1930 by Swami Prabhavananda. Since then it has grown tremendously, attracting well-known writers, intellectuals and others. People like Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood (who wrote a life of Sri Ramakrishna) had been associated with this centre.

The Hollywood centre consists of many buildings in one of which is housed a convent for nuns. It has another convent at Santa Barbara (1½ hours by car), and a monastery at Trabuco Canyon (1½ hours in another direction), houses at San Diego near the Mexican border and Pasadena where Vivekananda stayed for 4 or 5 weeks in January-February 1900 as the guest of Mead sisters. The Pasadena house has now become a place of pilgrimage for Ramakrishna-Vivekananda



Vivekananda House, South Pasadena

admirers.

After lunch and rest, I was taken for a walk-cum-ride up the hill to see the Hollywood reservoir. California has plenty of mountains, hills and dales, which make it attractive. It is the biggest and the richest state in the USA. The north is green and has many lakes. The south is arid and dry. Nevertheless, the climate is moderate and salubrious. The countryside is full of farm houses growing rice, wheat, maize, etc, and orchards of oranges, apples and other fruits. America is a land of plenty. The grains produced in excess of requirement are destroyed so as to keep the price from falling, in order to help the farmers! When I asked a gentleman why these grains could not be shipped to starving African countries, I got the answer that the shipping cost is prohibitive! Of course, this could only be one of the reasons.

At 7 pm I had a question-answer session with the monastics. It was interesting. Hollywood centre has the highest number of swamis and nuns—more than 30—in the whole of USA. The nuns are all American. They live in two convents—one in Hollywood and another in Santa Barbara. The swamis live in Hollywood and Trabuco; one or two also stay at Pasadena and San Diego.

Next morning, I left for Santa Barbara, accompanied by Swami Sarvadevananda. Amrita Salm drove. She took us via Sunset Boulevard along the Pacific Coast, through charming scenery. At Malibu, we went to a Hindu temple. Like the ones at Chicago and St Louis, this temple too is a big place, with separate shrines for Sri Venkateswara and Shiva. Vaishnava and Shaiva priests have been brought from southern India. They live here and carry on the worship. I found one interesting thing they do here: a marriage ceremony was going on as in southern Indian temples,

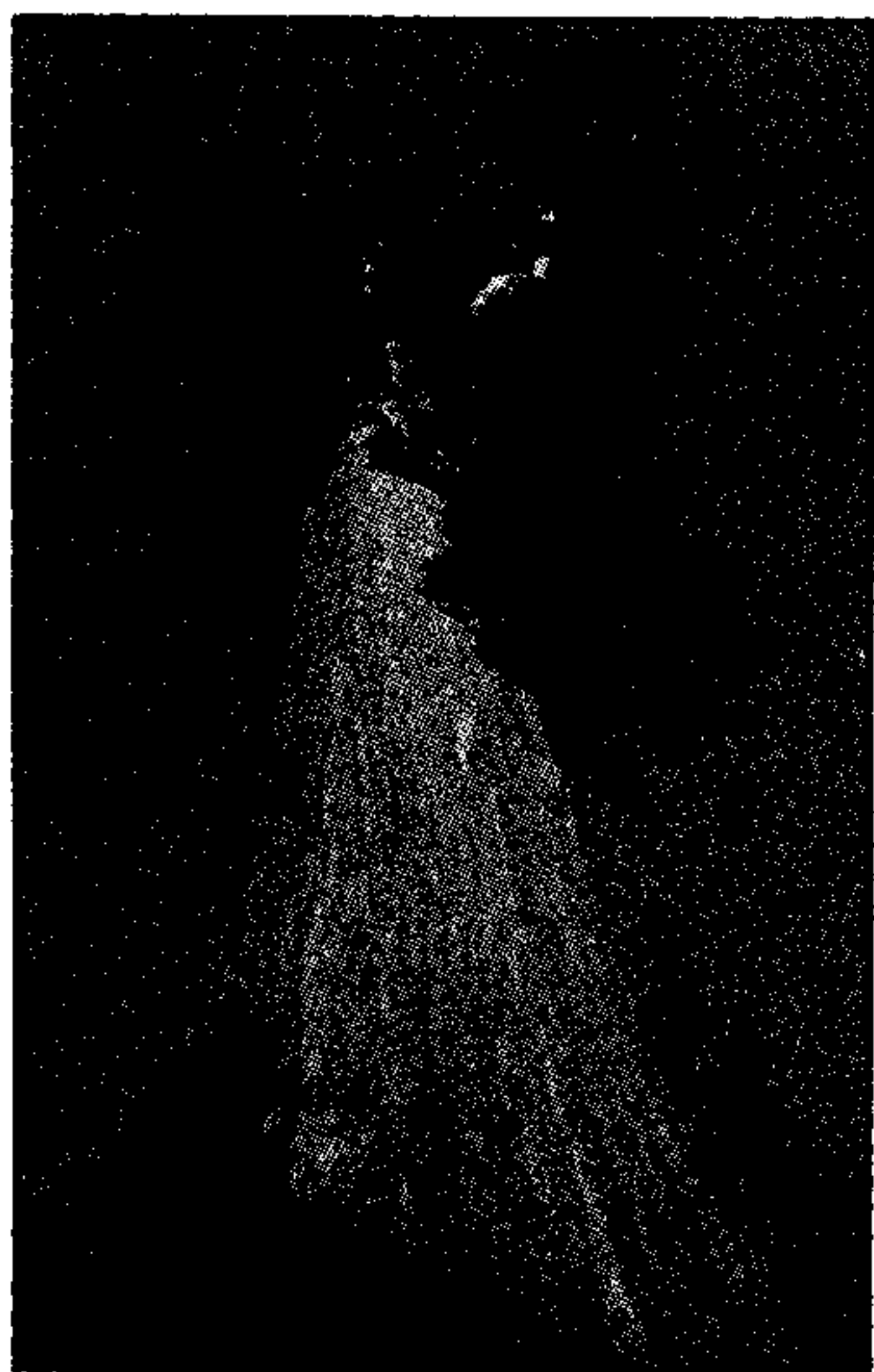


Santa Barbara temple

but with a difference—the bride was American and the bridegroom was a south Indian! Before reaching Santa Barbara, we stopped at Amrita's house. It is a beautiful little cottage. After coffee, we proceeded to Santa Barbara and reached by 12 noon. It is a small town. Our convent is spread over a 50-acre undulating land, beautifully kept. The Pacific Ocean is on the horizon. Plenty of trees and flowers adorn the landscape, giving it a serene atmosphere. The shrine-cum-chapel is very artistically designed. Motifs of Tibetan Buddhism have been used. Even the pictures on the altar have a mysterious glow. There is a cabin in the midst of trees, which is the Holy Mother shrine. A nice place for meditation!

In the afternoon, I spoke on 'Vedanta and the Modern World' to an audience of 70 people. On Sundays or holidays there are around 200 people. After dinner and discussions, we went to bed at 10 pm. A separate house is maintained for visiting swamis. Swami Swahananda, head of the Hollywood centre, and Swami Sarvadevananda give talks here on alternate weeks.

At 7.30 next morning we left for Sequoia National Park on the Sierra Nevada range of mountains, to see the General Sherman tree, the biggest *living* thing on earth! It is a long drive. Though we neared the tree, we had to



Sierra Nevada: A giant sequoia

turn back for want of time. Due to the ongoing construction on a portion of the road, traffic was one way and each way was allowed only for 10 minutes in an hour. This resulted in waste of time. Since we had to reach Hol-

lywood by 6.30 pm, we had no alternative but to turn back. So near, yet so far!

Speaking about sequoias, these are conifers similar to redwood trees. There are two kinds. The one that grows along the Pacific Coast is called *Sequoia sempervirens*. It grows to a very great height, the tallest being 367.8 ft! The other one called *Sequoiadendron giganteum* grows larger in bulk and lives longer (3,200 years, while the former one is only 2,000 years old!), but its height is only 311 ft. The *General Sherman* tree is 40 ft in diameter!

We were above 6,000 ft and snow was lying on either side of the road. Some sequoia trees could be seen, but not the biggest one. In between the forest, we could see peaks covered by snow. Sierra Nevada has many peaks rising to 10,000 ft and above, the highest being Mt Whitney, 14,400 ft. Reaching back Hollywood by 6.30 pm, I had to speak on the *Bhagavadgita* to an audience of 65

or 70 people.

Next morning, we (Sarvadevananda, Prasun, his father and myself) left for Disneyland on our way to Trabuco Canyon, a monastery set in a hilly region amidst thick forest. Disneyland is world-famous. Before I left Belur Math, a 4-year-old boy, learning that I was going to the USA, asked me to bring a 'Mickey Mouse' for him. If you go to California and return without seeing Disneyland, you are in for lot of raised eyebrows and pitying!

Disneyland is a vast area of fantasy. If you decide to see everything that is there, it would take *two* full days! This is indeed a wonderful entertainment. But so far as adults are concerned, well, I can't say that it can hold our attention for long. Anyway, I could spare only 2½ hours for it. The section called 'Small World' and also the enclosure on Abraham Lincoln, giving in a simulated voice his Gettysburg Address, impressed me, while I felt that the section on 'Pirates of the Caribbean' was devoid of purpose and perhaps harmful for children. All said and done, Disneyland is indeed a great surprise to any visitor. We reached Trabuco at 1.30 pm. Only five monastics live in this monastery; all except one are



Sierra Nevada: Giant sequoias compared to the cars that ply by



Trabuco monastery

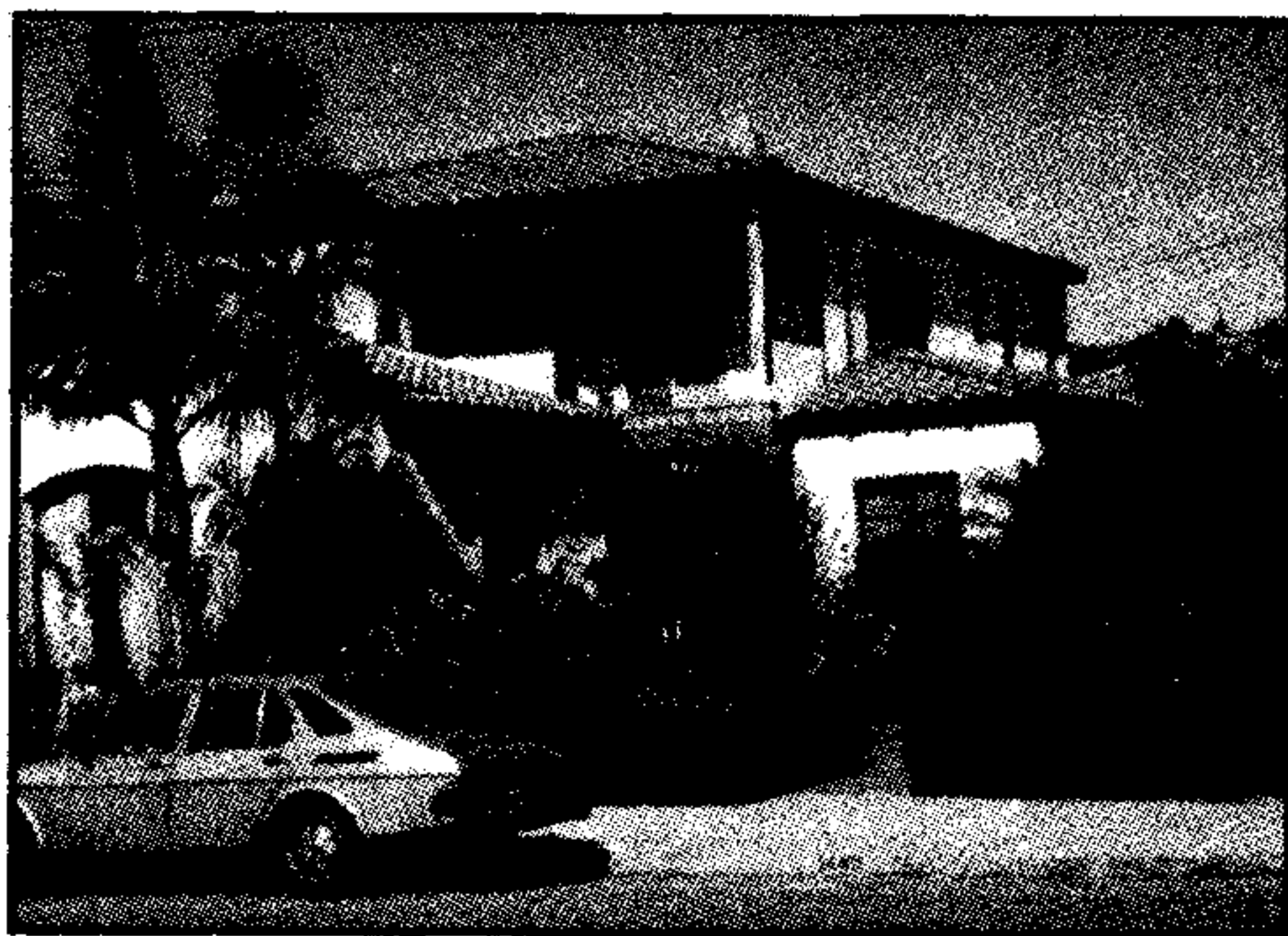
aged. In the afternoon, we went on the 'Harmony of Religions Trail'—1½ miles long. Little shrines of different religions, including one of the American Indians—have been installed in the midst of the forest. It was Buddha Jayanti day; so I offered some flowers to Bhagavan Buddha at the Buddha shrine.

The shrine at Trabuco is designed in a special way. Its floor is 2½ ft *below* the altar. The place is kept almost dark to help meditation. In the evening, we went to Raji Asrani's house for dinner. She is an ardent devotee. Apart from her profession as an expert anaesthetist, she and her friends run an organization called ASTI (American Services to India) through which they help various welfare activities in India financially. Next day morning we were on the road again towards San Diego. En route we went to Usha Hardinge's house in Laguna. Usha is a great Kali devotee. She is a writer by profession. She wants to build a Kali temple in an adjoining plot which she owns. She visits India, particularly the Dakshineswar Kali temple, almost every year. The shrine at her house is a 'parliament' of many gods and goddesses, besides many saints. She was immensely glad that I visited her place. Next, we moved on to San Diego. The high-

ways and freeways in California are dotted with oleander bushes—on the curb, on the sides—in full bloom and in various colours.

It would be interesting to say a few words here on Sans and Santas in California. It is full of them. 'San' in Spanish means 'Saint'. So you may say California is a country of saints and women saints! Once upon a time—maybe 200 years ago—California was with Mexico. The area was taken over to the USA by President Jackson. But the Spanish names remained. Hence it is full of *Sans*, beginning with San Francisco. Another interesting thing is that you have to pronounce Spanish names in the Spanish way. Thus San Jose is to be pronounced 'San Hosay', Vallejo as 'Valleho' and so on. Of course, you can't make Jack and Jean as 'Hack and Hean'!

Reaching San Diego Ashrama by 11.45 am, after snacks and a cup of tea, we went to see the famous San Diego zoo. Being far south, the sun was quite hot. Though the zoo is *one*



San Diego monastery

of the best in the world, it can't claim to be the best in the world, as it is made out. We had a delayed lunch and rest. In the evening after *arati*, we had a pot-luck dinner. About 40 devotees came. I spoke to them on 'Spiritual Life'.

(to be continued)

He who is able to renounce all for His sake is a living god.

Education in the Vision of Swami Vivekananda

DR SUDIPTA DUTTA ROY

Dr Sudipta Dutta Roy is a UGC Research Associate, attached to the Philosophy Group of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Influenced by Swami Vivekananda's writings, she has developed a keen interest in exploring his philosophy in different fields of thought.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a great thinker and reformer of India, embraces education, which for him signifies 'man-making', as the very mission of his life. In this paper, which purports to expound and analyse Vivekananda's views on education, an endeavour has been made to focus on the basic theme of his philosophy, viz the spiritual unity of the universe. Whether it concerns the goal or aim of education, or its method of approach or its component parts, all his thoughts, we shall observe, stem from this dormant theme of his philosophy which has its moorings in Vedanta.

Vivekananda realizes that mankind is passing through a crisis. The tremendous emphasis on the scientific and mechanical ways of life is fast reducing man to the status of a machine. Moral and religious values are being undermined. The fundamental principles of civilization are being ignored. Conflicts of ideals, manners and habits are pervading the atmosphere. Disregard for everything old is the fashion of the day. Vivekananda seeks the solutions of all these social and global evils through education. With this end in view, he feels the dire need of awakening man to his spiritual self wherein, he thinks, lies the very purpose of education.

The Goal or Objective of Education

Vivekananda points out that the defect of the present-day education is that it has no definite goal to pursue. A sculptor has a clear

idea about what he wants to shape out of the marble block; similarly, a painter knows what he is going to paint. But a teacher, he says, has no clear idea about the goal of his teaching. Swamiji attempts to establish, through his words and deeds, that the end of all education is man-making. He prepares the scheme of this man-making education in the light of his overall philosophy of Vedanta. According to Vedanta, the essence of man lies in his soul which he possesses in addition to his body and mind.



In tune with this philosophy, Swamiji defines education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man.'¹ The aim of education is to manifest in our lives the perfection which is the very nature of our inner self. This perfection is the realization of the infinite power which resides in everything and everywhere—existence, consciousness and bliss (*satchidananda*). After understanding the essential nature of this perfection, we should identify it with our inner self. For achieving this, one will have to eliminate one's ego, ignorance and all other false identifications which stand in the way. Meditation, fortified by moral purity and passion for truth, helps man to leave behind the body, the senses, the ego and all other non-self elements which are perishable. He thus realizes his immortal divine self which is of the nature of infinite

1. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 4, p. 358. [Hereafter *Complete Works*.]

existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss. At this stage, man becomes aware of his self as identical with all other selves of the universe, ie different selves as manifestations of the same self. Hence education, in Vivekananda's sense, enables one to comprehend one's self within as the self everywhere. The essential unity of the entire universe is realized through education. Accordingly, man-making for Swamiji stands for rousing man to the awareness of his true self. However, education thus signified does not point towards the development of the soul in isolation from body and mind. We have to remember that the basis of Swamiji's philosophy is Advaita which preaches unity in diversity. Therefore, man-making for him means a harmonious development of the body, mind and soul.

In his scheme of education, Swamiji lays great stress on physical health because a sound mind resides in a sound body. He often quotes the Upanishadic dictum '*nāyamātmā balahinena labhyaḥ*', ie the self cannot be realized by the physically weak. However, along with physical culture, he harps on the need of paying special attention to the culture of the mind. According to Swamiji, the mind of the students has to be controlled and trained through meditation, concentration and practise of ethical purity. All success in any line of work, he emphasizes, is the result of the power of concentration. By way of illustration, he mentions that the chemist in the laboratory concentrates all the powers of his mind and brings them into one focus—the elements to be analysed—and finds out their secrets. Concentration, which necessarily implies detachment from other things, constitutes a part of *brahmacharya* which is one of the guiding motifs of his scheme of education. *Brahmacharya*, in a nutshell, stands for the practice of self-control for securing harmony of the impulses. By his philosophy of education, Swamiji thus brings it home that education is not a mere

accumulation of information but a comprehensive training for life. To quote him: 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there undigested, all your life.'² Education for him means that process by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, and intellect is sharpened, as a result of which one can stand on one's own feet.

Method or Procedure

Having analysed the goal or objective of education, the next question that naturally arises is about the method of imparting education. Here again, we note the Vedantic foundation of Swamiji's theory. According to him, knowledge is inherent in every man's soul. What we mean when we say that a man 'knows' is only what he 'discovers' by taking the cover off his own soul. Consequently, he draws our attention to the fact that the task of the teacher is only to help the child to manifest its knowledge by removing the obstacles in its way. In his words: 'Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge — even in a boy it is so—and it requires only an awakening and that much is the work of a teacher.'³ To drive his point home, he refers to the growth of a plant. Just as in the case of a plant, one cannot do anything more than supplying it with water, air and manure while it grows from within its own nature, so is the case with a human child. Vivekananda's method of education resembles the heuristic method of the modern educationists.⁴ In this system, the teacher invokes the spirit of enquiry in the pupil who is supposed to find out things for himself under the bias-free guidance of the teacher.

Swamiji lays a lot of emphasis on the



2. *Complete Works*, Vol. 3, p. 302.

3. *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 366.

4. Amiya Kumar Majumdar, *Understanding Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1972), p. 50.

environment at home and school for the proper growth of the child. The parents as well as the teachers should inspire the child by the way they live their lives. Swamiji recommends the old institution of *gurukula* (living with the preceptor) and similar systems for the purpose. In such systems, the students can have the ideal character of the teacher constantly before them which serves as the role model to follow.

Although Swamiji is of the opinion that mother tongue is the right medium for social or mass education, he prescribes the learning of English and Sanskrit also. While English is necessary for mastering Western science and technology, Sanskrit leads one into the depths of our vast store of classics. The implication is that if language does not remain the privilege of a small class of people, social unity will march forward unhampered.

Fields of Study

Vivekananda, in his scheme of education, meticulously includes all those studies which are necessary for the all-round development of the body, mind and soul of the individual. These studies can be brought under the broad heads of physical culture, aesthetics, classics, language, religion, science and technology. According to Swamiji, the cultural values of the country should form an integral part of the curriculum of education. The culture of India has its roots in her spiritual values. The time-tested values are to be imbibed in the thoughts and lives of the students through the study of the classics like *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Gita*, *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. This will keep the perennial flow of our spiritual values into the world culture.

Education, according to Swamiji, remains incomplete without the teaching of aesthetics or fine arts. He cites Japan as an example of how the combination of art and utility can make a nation great.

Swamiji reiterates that religion is the innermost core of education. However, by relig-

ion, he does not mean any particular kind of it but its essential character which is the realization of the divinity already in man. He reminds us time and again that religion does not consist in dogmas or creeds or any set of rituals. To be religious for him means leading life in such a way that we manifest our higher nature, truth, goodness and beauty, in our thoughts, words and deeds. All impulses, thoughts and actions which lead one towards this goal are naturally ennobling and harmonizing, and are ethical and moral in the truest sense. It is in this context that Swamiji's idea of religion as the basis of education should be understood. We note that in his interpretation, religion and education share the identity of purpose. Why religion forms the very foundation of education becomes clear in his following words: 'In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others, and peace to one's own self, religion is the highest motive power,



and, therefore, ought to be studied from that standpoint.'⁵ Swamiji believes that if education with its religious core can invigorate man's faith in his divine nature and the infinite potentialities of the human soul, it is sure to help man become strong, yet tolerant and sympathetic. It will also help man to extend his love and goodwill beyond the communal, national and racial barriers.

It is a misinterpretation of Vivekananda's philosophy of education to think that he has overemphasized the role of spiritual development to the utter neglect of the material side. Vivekananda, in his plan for the regeneration of India, recurringly presses the need for the eradication of poverty, unemployment and ignorance. He says, 'We need technical education and all else which may develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy

5. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, p. 67.

day.⁶ He feels it necessary that India should take from the Western nations all that is good in their civilization. However, just like a person, every nation has its individuality which should not be destroyed. The individuality of India lies in her spiritual culture. Hence in Swamiji's view, for the development of a balanced nation, we have to combine the dynamism and scientific attitude of the West with the spirituality of our country. The entire educational programme should be so planned that it equips the youth to contribute to the material progress of the country as well as to maintaining the supreme worth of India's spiritual heritage.

Another important aspect of Swamiji's scheme of education is women's education. He realizes that if the women of our country get the right type of education, then they will be able to solve their own problems in their own way. The main objective of his scheme of female education is to make them strong, fearless, and conscious of their chastity and dignity. He observes that although men and women are equally competent in academic matters, yet women have a special aptitude and competence for studies relating to home and family. Hence he recommends the introduction of subjects like sewing, nursing, domestic science, culinary art, etc which were not part of education at his time.

Conclusion

The exposition and analysis of Vivekananda's scheme of education brings to light its constructive, practical and comprehensive character. He realizes that it is only

through education that the uplift of masses is possible. To refer to his own words: 'Traveling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? "Education" was the answer I got.'⁷ He states it emphatically that if society is to be reformed, education has to reach everyone—high and low, because individuals are the very constituents of society. The sense of dignity rises in man when he becomes conscious of his inner spirit, and that is the very purpose of education. He strives to harmonize the traditional values of India with the new values brought through the progress of science and technology.

It is in the transformation of man through moral and spiritual education that he finds the solution for all social evils. Founding education on the firm ground of our own philosophy and culture, he shows the best of remedies for today's social and global illness. Through his scheme of education, he tries to materialize the moral and spiritual welfare and upliftment of humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality or time. However, Swami Vivekananda's scheme of education, through which he wanted to build up a strong nation that will lead the world towards peace and harmony, is still a far cry. It is high time that we give serious thought to his philosophy of education and remember his call to everybody—'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.' □

6. *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 372.

7. *Complete Works*, Vol. 4, p. 483.

This is the Advaitist's position with regard to evolution—evolution of nature and manifestation of the Self within. ... It was covered, as it were, with a veil, the veil of Maya, and as this Maya veil becomes thinner and thinner, the inborn, natural glory of the soul comes out and becomes more manifest. ... The treatment of one man to another will be entirely revolutionised, and these old, old ideas of pointing to the weakness of mankind will have to go.

—Swami Vivekananda

Some Interesting Facts

SWAMI DESHIKATMANANDA

Swami Deshikatmanandaji Maharaj looks after the Ramakrishna Mission Free Tuberculosis Clinic and Medical Centre in New Delhi. He contributes articles to different national dailies from time to time. In this absorbing article, Deshikatmanandaji narrates his interesting experiences during the 1997 centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's return to India from the West.

Preface

After his historic success at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, USA, and the triumphant success in spreading the eternal message of Hinduism and Vedanta in the West, Swami Vivekananda returned to India via Sri Lanka on 26 January 1897. The whole nation rose to receive Vivekananda, as it were.

Tamil Nadu, where he set his holy feet first, rose to the occasion in a remarkable way. Romain Rolland's words about Swami Vivekananda's triumphal march from southern to northern India are thrilling. He says:

The news of Vivekananda's success at the Parliament of Religions was slow in reaching India, but once it became known, it created an outburst of joy and national pride. ... In the great towns committees of all sections of society were formed to receive him. Triumphal arches were erected, streets and houses were decorated. ... today his was a triumphal progress with an escort of delirious people. Rajas prostrated themselves before him or drew his carriage. The cannon boomed, and in the exotic processions wherein elephants and camels rode, choirs

chanted the victory of Judas Maccabeus. ... Madras had been expecting him for weeks in a kind of passionate delirium. She erected for him seventeen triumphal arches, presented him with twenty-four addresses in various languages of Hindustan, and suspended her whole public life at his coming—nine days of roaring fetes. ... He replied to the frenzied expectancy of the people by his message to India, a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Rama, of Shiva, of Krishna, and calling the heroic Spirit, the immortal Atman, to march to war. He was a general, explaining his *Plan of Campaign*, and

calling his people to rise *en masse*: 'My India, arise! Where is your vital force? In your immortal soul....'¹

The Centenary

The centenary celebration of this grand coming was also a historic event. The activities to organize the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's return to India started quite early; that is, towards the end of 1996. All those



The Rameshwaram temple

1. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, trans. E.F. Malcolm-Smith (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), pp. 103-7.



*Bhaskara Sethupati,
the Raja of Ramnad*

places between Rameshwaram and Chennai (then Madras) where Swamiji visited, stayed, and spoke were considered and studied. A group of monks visited all these places, met the local leaders, admirers and well-wishers.

Many committees were formed. Publicity material like wall-posters, pamphlets, etc were given to the leaders of the committees. The entire programme was a grand success. Beginning with its inauguration at Rameshwaram on 26 January 1997 and ending with the imposing conclusion at Chennai on 15 February 1997, it was a unique event. What we are going to narrate here are some of the thrilling incidents that happened during these centenary celebrations and also about some of the places where Swami Vivekananda stayed or spoke.

As it was done a century ago, it was planned to receive Swamiji symbolically through his life-size painting near the Pamban bridge. Then, the picture was to be carried in a chariot, 'Swami Vivekananda Ratham', through whichever place he went, and finally it was to reach Chennai. But just a few days before the reception meeting, some leaders belonging to different communities met the organizers and requested them to shift the place of reception to Kundukal (called 'Canticle'), about 3 km away from the Pamban bridge, where the Raja of Ramnad had actually received Swamiji. The Raja of Ramnad had erected a victory monument in the form of a light tower, 40 feet in height, on 27 January 1897 at that spot on which the following words had been inscribed:

Satyameva Jayate

The monument erected by Bhaskara Sethupati, the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's blessed feet trod on Indian soil, together with the Swamiji's English disciples, on His Holiness' return from the Western Hemisphere, where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness' philanthropic labours to spread the religion of the Vedanta.

27 January 1897

The local people told us that this monument was destroyed during the supercyclone. This place is still called Canticle. When the change of venue was proposed, a meeting of local leaders had to be called hurriedly. It was well-attended: Muslims, Christians, Hindus, members of different political parties including the communists, all came. The road to Canticle was narrow and it passed through a Muslim locality and a church. Finally it was decided to receive Swamiji's photograph at Canticle. All communities extended their fullest support to the proposal. Incidentally, the chairman of the local panchayat was a Christian.

Help from Muslims

Things went off well on the 27th. But on the 28th, we were awakened by policemen at 1:30 am. They informed us that a Muslim leader had been assassinated at Coimbatore—a few miles away. The policemen also told us that Muslims throughout Tamil Nadu might agitate, and there could be problems when the Swami Vivekananda Ratham would go through many cities, towns and villages in procession. There was a message from the Director General of Police, Chennai, to give protection to the Ratham, and to cancel processions in sensitive areas where Muslims were a majority. As planned before, we left Rameshwaram the next morning by 7:30 am and continued our procession with all the paraphernalia. There were a number of vehicles and a chariot of Vivekananda Kendra along with ours.

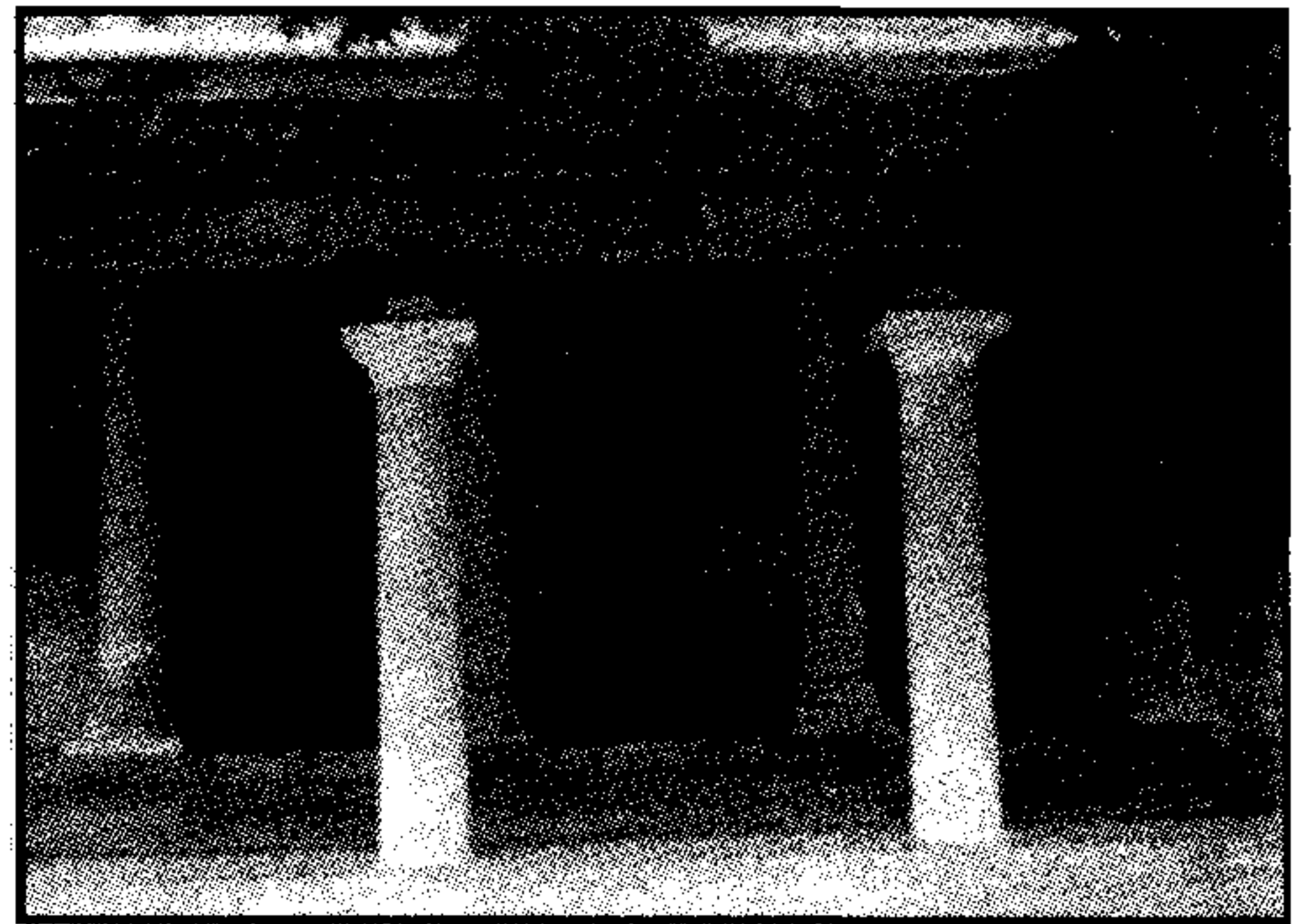
Our next destination was Ramanathapu-

ram. In that city, a procession had been planned along its streets with about 3,000 students participating, and there were also plans for a public meeting and some cultural programme. But suddenly the Vivekananda Ratham came to a halt. There was a long queue of vehicles along the road as the Muslim leaders had blocked the road. All were anxious. The Superintendent of Police tried to persuade the leaders to allow vehicles to pass, but they were adamant. Finally, the Superintendent told them that the Vivekananda Ratham was on its way to Chennai in connection with the centenary of his return from the West. He also added that in case the leaders did anything to hamper the progress of the Ratham, it would bring a bad name to the Muslim community. The leaders discussed this among themselves and soon, a Muslim leader came near the Ratham and said: 'Let the Vivekananda Ratham proceed.'

The proposed procession at Ramana-thapuram was cancelled. But the chairman of the municipal council held a meeting of prominent citizens of the city. Cutting across divisions of religion and political affiliation, everyone spoke highly of Swami Vivekananda's contribution to the harmony of religions and for the progress of the nation. Even Muslim leaders extolled not only Swami Vivekananda's achievements, but also Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings. The media gave a wide coverage of this meeting. Thereafter, there was no problem at all for the procession, and the Muslim community happily participated in the procession. In some places, they distributed yogurt (buttermilk), cold water, etc to the tired participants. Even in Chennai, where the procession had to pass through a big mosque at Triplicane Road, there was no problem at all for the long procession of bhajan-and-patriotic-song-singing devotees, since there had been a meeting between our monks and the mullah of the mosque earlier. The police, who wanted to divert the route of the procession, appreciated this move of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Some New Findings

A few things came to light after visiting the places where Swami Vivekananda stayed and spoke. In Rameshwaram, there is a beautiful building called 'Vivekananda Bhaskaram'. What Swamiji said about the Raja of Ramnad, Bhaskara Sethupati, and about real worship at the Rameshwaram temple are engraved on the wall here. It was here that Swamiji stayed on 27 January 1897. Again, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi along with Radhu and some other women devotees, Swami Ramakrishnananda along with Ramu of Chennai and others, all stayed in this very building during Mother's visit in 1910. Unfortunately, it is wrongly mentioned in the life of Holy Mother that Bhaskara Sethupati arranged for Holy Mother's stay. Bhaskara Sethupati had already passed away on 27 December 1903. The Sethupatis were a short-



Vivekananda Bhaskaram

lived race because of a curse from a great saint by name Thayumanavar. When we visited Sethupati's palace (it's now under the Archaeological Survey of India), we were astonished to see that most of the kings of this clan had passed away before forty. Bhaskara Sethupati was born on 3 November 1868 and passed away on 27 December 1903. His son, Rajeswara Sethupati, was born on 3 June 1889 and died in 1928. When Holy Mother visited Rameshwaram, this Sethupati was ruling Ramnad.

In the Rameshwaram temple they have



Archway of the Ramnad palace

still preserved Swamiji's remarks written in the visitors' book in his own handwriting. Swamiji had written on 27 January 1897, when he visited the temple, as follows: 'I have great pleasure in testifying to the politeness and ready service of the priests and supervisors of this temple. —Swami Vivekananda'

The Assistant Commissioner who showed it said that while going through the old records, he came across an insect-eaten visitors' book. While turning the pages, he came across Swamiji's handwritten remarks. He removed that sheet and pasted it on a good notebook. Incidentally, this gentleman was an old student of the school run by the Ramakrishna Math at Tirupparaithurai. Swamiji's speech on real worship is engraved on the stone wall of the temple at the entrance.

Ramanathapuram was called 'Mugavai Nagar' during Swamiji's time. At the Sethupati Palace, there is a durbar hall with a throne, some of the weapons used by the kings, a display board containing the chronological list of the rajas who ruled over Ramnad, etc. Their paintings too are preserved. The palace is a two-storeyed building. There are many wall-paintings. Seeing one or two made us turn away. We were told that the Sethupatis were great lovers of art and music, and so they imitated the Konark art in their palace paintings. The entrance arch of the palace is a huge structure where elephants, chariots etc would move about freely.

Bhaskara Sethupati knew that he was

shortlived. So like Emperor Yayati of the *Mahabharata* he enjoyed pleasures to his heart's content, and like Girish Chandra Ghosh of Sri Ramakrishna he had no sin left uncommitted. He was so repentant and worried as to what would happen to him after his death. An astrologer of great fame foretold that the king was going to meet a great spiritual luminary soon, whose blessing would destroy all his sins and liberate him. The astrologer also told Bhaskara Sethupathi how to recognize the saint. When Bhaskara met Swami Vivekananda, he instantly recognized him as his redeemer. The touch and blessings of Swamiji brought about a great change in his life.

Shankara Villa, where Swamiji stayed, was a beautiful building once upon a time; but now it is a dilapidated structure. The Centenary Committee planned to acquire this building and use it as a public library after some renovation work. They had even met Rani

Indira Devi Nachiyar, wife of Ramanatha Sethupati. But since the Rani passed away, the plan did not materialize. Ramanatha Sethupati had done some good work by way of renovating the light tower (victory monument) which was erected where Swamiji was received. There is a stone tablet on which the following words (in translation) are inscribed:

When Swami Vivekananda returned for the first time after attending the Parliament of Religions, a light tower was erected in Mugavai



Shankara Villa



The renovated victory monument (light tower)

Nagar where he was given reception on 25.1.1897. This tower was renovated and the light was lit by Sri Ramanatha Sethupati on 5.11.1968. —S. Sitaraman, Commissioner, and S. Bhupathi, Chairman, Municipal Council.

At Manmadurai (usually printed as Manamadura), where Swamiji gave the

'Reply to the Address of Welcome at Shiva-ganga and Manmadura'² there was only one house which was large enough to accommodate Swamiji and his entourage. That was the house of the lawyer (*vakil*) of the Shivaganga zamindars. These were the zamindars who presented an address to Swamiji when he visited that place. The lawyer's name was

2. See Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 3, p. 163.

Ramaswami Raju. The descendants of Ramaswami Raju still preserve the platform (see picture) upon which Swamiji sat and meditated, and delivered the now famous lecture. In the course of these 100 years, much has changed in the building because

of partition and annexes, but the platform remains intact. During the centenary celebrations, a memorial pillar was erected just near the house by the village *panchayat*.

All these places may be well-known now, but during Swamiji's time they were all remote areas in southern India. Yet, an unknown monk that he was, he awakened the spirit of vibrant Hinduism in the people there and the effect is seen till now. Can Swamiji's proclamation that 'India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love,' ever go false? □



Ramaswami Raju



The platform used by Swamiji



Ramaswami Raju's house

In matters of opinion, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand firm as a rock.

Need for a National Awareness

DR S. P. DUBEY

In our ongoing series on popularizing philosophy, we have Dr S.P. Dubey, Professor of Philosophy, Rani Durgavati University, Jabalpur, presenting his views.

Why should we make philosophy popular? After all, philosophy has traditionally been the area of a selected few whose experiences and thoughts have impacts on the popular mind. In India, at times, the subject has been identified with *guhya-vidya* ('secret science'). But one can also say with equal force that in India philosophy is quite popular. Whether one is literate or not, one knows the truth of life and the meaning of maya.

However, there is a point in saying that the subject is getting unpopular. The decreasing number of students in the classrooms evinces this fact. Further, those who seek admission in the subject do not show much interest in it. For a good number of philosophy students in colleges and universities the subject is as good or bad as any other. For some of them, especially for the female students, it is like a pastime and they discontinue their studies as soon as a job is available or enter into matrimonial relations. Hence those who are concerned with the subject feel concerned about the situation. They try to find out the ways and means to make it popular.

Let us see where the subject is still popular today. It is undoubtedly popular at centres of competitive examinations. At Allahabad, Delhi, Chandigarh, etc admission has to be restricted as a large number of students seek that. It has been a scoring subject for government administrative jobs. The number of students is good in institutions which have the integrated pattern, ie, having both undergraduate and postgraduate facilities in the subject. The number of students is still larger in states or universities which have the subject

at the secondary level. On the contrary, the number of students is small where either undergraduate or postgraduate classes are being run by some colleges or universities. In either case, the personality of the teacher makes a major impact. A good teacher of the subject obviously draws more students in the classroom.

The subject, as a pure discipline, is bound to be not-so-attractive for the popular mind today. But as an applied one it has great possibilities. For example, Yoga is one area which has the sky as its limits. Branches of ethics are also attractive. Religion is another popular dimension of the subject. If these areas are taken up by those responsible for imparting education to society, the subject is bound to become popular. This will also improve job opportunities for philosophy graduates.

Popular books on the subject and lectures through the electronic media can remove misgivings about the subject, and it can gain popularity. The Ramakrishna Mission, Chinmaya Mission and the like have done a formidable job in the context. But much more is to be done by most of us. I personally feel that the national conferences on the subject do contribute to the popularisation of philosophy, and I humbly contribute to it. But a national awareness is a must. For this the politicians owe an obligation to society. If one wants a healthy and harmonious society, the philosophical attitude has to be developed. If the lives and deeds of political leaders of the country are philosophically-oriented, the masses will follow them. As the *Bhagavadgita* tells us, people follow what noble persons do. □

Such was the Unique Devotee!

MAHENDRANATH DUTTA

Can you imagine? In our modern times, during the 20th century, there lived in the heart of Kolkata a lady with whom Lord Krishna played day and night. She had to scold him many times. She would feed him, make him sleep, bathe him, and play with him. This lady was called Gopāler Mā (in Bengali; meaning 'Gopāla's Mother'). Her actual name was Aghormani Devi. For a fuller account of her life, kindly refer to Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master. Here are her reminiscences by Mahendranath Dutta, another luminary—a brother of Swami Vivekananda. These reminiscences were published in Udbodhan (Bhadra, 1332 BE). We are presenting you a free translation of some select portions.

I was a young boy then. In 1887, I went to the Baranagar Math [the first Math of the Ramakrishna Sangha] on a sultry day at about 4 pm. I had walked all the way. There was no umbrella, and so I had sweated profusely. While I was about to climb the stairs, I met an old lady who had just then got down from the stairs. She was very fat, had not many teeth left, and all her hair had turned white. She must be around 60 years, I guessed. When I was about to climb up, she caught hold of me, put her loving hands on my shoulder, and wiped the sweat on my brow with her sari and, surprisingly, wept! She would wipe my face with her cloth, and would kiss me as Bengali mothers and grandmothers do to their little children. It was as if she was showering her blessings on me. 'O my child! You are Naren's brother. The sun's heat has fallen on your face and so it has become red; seeing this I feel such a pain in my heart!' She was speaking in such a loving, maternal tone that I had no time to think of either offering *pranams* or talking to her. Her pure love brought tears in my eyes. I ran upstairs. The old lady also walked slowly towards the bazar. This lady is Gopāla's Mother (Gopāler Mā) who would look upon Sri Ramakrishna also as Gopāla.

Some 3-4 months later, I visited Balaram Basu's house one day. Gopāler Mā had arrived there just then. She was very tired. But as soon as she saw me, she came near and once again

began wiping the sweat on my face with her cloth. Later she brought out two pieces of *sandesh* (sweets) and began to feed me slowly. Along with that, she most lovingly began to stroke my back and head as if I were a little child. Soon she was in tears: 'My child, I had taken these two sweets to Simla [a locality in Kolkata, where the parental house of Swami Vivekananda is situated]. Seeing that Naren wasn't home, I began weeping and couldn't enter your house. How can I enter your house without Naren's being there? Now eat them; I was thinking of you; eat.'

I came to know later that she had come all the way from her distant Kamarhati home to Balaram Babu's house. Balaram's family had given her two *sandesh* to eat. She had packed them in a leaf-plate and had tied that to her cloth. Later, she had walked to Simla near Baghbazar with that packet, and seeing that my brother Narendra wasn't there, had returned to Baghbazar. I had witnessed a new type of pure love after Sri Ramakrishna's advent, which will remain for all time to come.

Some time later, people began to arrive. I was sauntering with Swami Yogananda and discussing many things with him. The newcomers, all versed in the scriptures and numbering about 15, went to Gopāler Mā and began asking terse questions to her. Gopāler Mā said: 'O dear! I am an old woman. How do I know about your scriptures? Go and ask

Sharat [Swami Saradananda], Yogen [Swami Yogananda] or Tarak [Swami Shivananda]. Those people wouldn't leave her in peace. They pestered her to answer them. So Gopāler Mā said: 'Then, wait! I shall ask my Gopāla. Gopāla! O Gopāla! Listen, my child, to what these people are saying! What after all do I understand? I don't know scriptures but these people are talking about them. Please tell them what it's all about.'

Listening to her words, all were stunned. What's this going on, they wondered. With whom is Gopāler Mā speaking so clearly? They were still more surprised to find her listening into the air, as if someone was speaking to her. Then she said: 'Listen, children! Gopāla says like this.' Those difficult questions that they had asked were all answered by her in a wonderful manner. All were amazed, dumbfounded, and began saying 'Ah! ah!' as if in ecstasy.

Almost everyone's questions had been answered; only three were left. Suddenly we saw Gopāler Mā say: 'O Gopāla! O Gopāla! Why are you going away? Why don't you answer these people too? Why are you going that way? Come back! You are always in a playful mood and keep running here and there! Come here, sit on my lap and answer them!' But it appeared that Gopāla went away. Those three people returned home with immense sadness.

Some days later, Gopāler Mā had come to

Balaram Babu's house once again. That day, many people had come to see her. They began to pester her: 'We want to see Gopāla!' The innocent Gopāla's Mother began to call her Gopāla repeatedly; but somehow that day her child Gopāla had become very naughty. He wouldn't listen to her at all. The more the people around pestered her, the more she called on him. But her Gopāla began to play hide and seek with her so much that she couldn't hold him or answer the people's questions.

Something unusual happened then. Gopāler Mā got up and began to run everywhere—veranda, hall, room after room, etc. With her bulky old body, it was difficult for her to run, but run she did, possibly behind her Gopāla. None could see the Divine Child, of course. But all that was so, so real! After a while she caught hold of her child and sat down with him. She began to scold him. All saw with surprise and delight even as she began to make signs of caressing the child. She then said: 'Okay, dear! You press this foot of mine; that will do. You are a baby and so needn't have to do much for me. Go, go and play. ... What? You want to press my other foot also? One is enough. No? Okay then. Press the other also. You will not allow me if I say no.' She stretched her left foot also. Then she began to shower kisses on the child. That day there were no questions and answers. □

True Devotion and its Fruit

The true lover of God must be more than perfect. For a perfect man may be self-contained and self-satisfied, but he may not have the power of satisfying others, just as a reservoir of water, full to the brim, is self-contained and lives only in itself. Not so the perennial spring, which is not only full in itself, but also springs out of itself with overflowing munificence for the sake of others. A true devotee is like that. He lives not so much for himself as for his Beloved and for those who belong to Him.

Through devotion liberation is very easily realized. It gives the lover his Beloved. After finally reaching Him for whom the soul has all the time been panting and struggling, is there any more work for it to do? In Him it rests. Him it feels to be the highest. This is the final goal in the dualistic interpretation of the Vedānta.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda

Hsuan Tsang: Prince of Travellers

WILLIAM PAGE

Mr William Page teaches English at the English Language Centre, Thammasat University, Bangkok. Separating fact from fiction, he presents the wonderful story of the Buddhist scholar Hsuan Tsang, whose writings have been the sources of noteworthy information to our historians.

Every East Asian child knows the story of Hsuan Tsang, the great 7th-century Tang Dynasty Mahayana Buddhist monk who journeyed from China to India in quest of Buddhist scriptures. But the popular version of this epic trek is fiction, based on the folk novel *Hsi Yu Chi* (*Journey to the West*), by the 16th century writer Wu Cheng-en, and partially translated into English by Arthur Waley under the title *Monkey*.

As Mr Waley remarks in his preface, Wu's version of the journey is a fairy tale—an immense, fantastic epic that interweaves mythology, folklore, allegory, religion, and satire. You could call it a combination of *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Don Quixote*, and the best of the Grimm Brothers. Magic and miracles abound, and the cast of characters include monsters, fairies, dragons, Bodhisattvas, and even the Buddha himself. The hero is not so much Hsuan Tsang as his mischievous and hyperactive disciple Sun Wu-kung, the Monkey King.

Sun Wu-kung has magical powers, but has been locked up in a mountain for wreaking havoc in heaven. He is released by the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin on the condition that he accompany Hsuan Tsang to India in his quest for the scriptures. They are joined by two acolytes—a river-monster and a pig-monster (whom Mr Waley calls Sandy and Pigsy). The improbable foursome undergo countless adventures, which constitute the bulk of the book and have been the subject of numerous movies, comic books, Chinese operas, and TV serials.

What is not generally known is that there

is another book, also called *Hsi Yu Chi*, which is Hsuan Tsang's actual account of the countries he visited. This was rendered into English by Samuel Beal and published in 1884 as *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*. A reprint has been published by Motilal Banarsidass of New Delhi.

If Hsuan Tsang had simply narrated the story of his journey, with all the adventures that must have befallen him, the *Hsi Yu Chi* could have been one of the greatest travel books ever written. But he does not do this, and as a result the book is stupefyingly dull. He writes in an impersonal, pedantic style and simply gives a brief account of each kingdom he passed through. Once he gets to India, he gives detailed descriptions of the people, customs, languages, etc. The modern reader has particular difficulty identifying some of the ancient Chinese place names with their modern counterparts.

So we get passages like this: 'Going southwest from this country 200 *li* or so, surmounting a small mountain range and crossing two large rivers, passing westwards through a level valley some 700 *li* or so, we come to the country of K'iu-chi. The country of K'iu-chi is from east to west some 1000 *li* or so; from north to south about 600 *li* ... The soil is suitable for rice and corn; it produces grapes, pomegranates, plums, pears, peaches, and almonds. The ground is rich in minerals ... The air is soft, and the manners of the people honest ... They excel other countries in their skill in playing on the lute and pipe ... There are about 100 convents in this country,

with 5000 and more disciples. These belong to the Little Vehicle of the school of the Sarvastivadians. Their doctrine and their rules of discipline are like those of India.'

In short, Hsuan Tsang's account reads much like a textbook of geography and anthropology. But he is always at pains to retell at length the Buddhist legends associated with any given place, together with the statistics of how many monasteries and convents there are and what particular school of Buddhism predominates. Of the hardships and adventures he encounters, he tells hardly a word.

But fortunately there is a biography of him, written by one of his disciples, Hui-li, which Mr Waley has drawn on to produce a little book called *The Real Tripitaka*. This relates in an engaging fashion the real story of Hsuan Tsang's quest.

What a formidable quest it was! Hsuan Tsang started out from the Chinese capital of Chang-an (the modern Xian) at the age of 27 in 629 AD, and headed northwestward through Kansu. He crossed the Gobi Desert and the Tien Shan, getting as far west as Samarkand before heading southward into Afghanistan, across the Hindu Kush, and thence into Pakistan and India.

In the beginning he travelled as a fugitive, for he was under the impression that monks as well as laymen required official permission to leave China. But the rules in this matter were ambiguous, and when he returned to China 16 years later, he was told (by the Emperor himself, no less) that monks were exempt.

He got off to a bad start. He left western Kansu riding a skinny roan horse and accompanied by a guide who abandoned him before they even reached the Chinese frontier. So he was forced to cross the Gobi Desert alone. His ordeal was compounded when he overturned his water container and lost his entire supply. For five days and four nights, he travelled through that vast wasteland without water. Understandably, he redoubled his prayers to his patron deity, Kuan Yin.

And somebody up there must have been listening, because this was his last major hardship before reaching India. At Turfan the king, a Buddhist, presented him with rich gifts, an entourage that included 30 horses, 25 servants, and four attendant monks, and letters of reference to the kings of 24 countries on his route.

From Turfan on, he travelled first class, 7th-century style. The kings of the countries he passed through were mostly Buddhists, and they treated him as a celebrity. He engaged in debates with scholars of various Buddhist sects and visited notable places of pilgrimage.

He also had some hair-raising adventures. In the Punjab he and some companions were attacked by robbers who stripped them of their clothing and started tying them up. Hsuan Tsang and a companion managed to escape to a nearby village. The villagers armed themselves and attacked the robbers, who fled. Hsuan Tsang's companions were shaken by this episode, but Hsuan Tsang reacted with his usual good cheer. They had lost their clothes and money, but, he said, quoting *The Book of Changes*, 'Life is the world's greatest treasure.' — and they still had life, so why worry?

After arriving in India, he visited the great places of Buddhist pilgrimage, studied with various scholars, and got the scriptures he had come for. Hsuan Tsang belonged to the Yogachara or Chittamatra ('Mind Only') school of Buddhism, an idealist school that believes that the empirical universe is merely a projection of the mind. The scriptures he sought were the Sanskrit texts of the *Yoga Shastra*, a collection of Yogachara works. To study them, he learned Sanskrit, and spent five years at the great Buddhist university at Nalanda. He travelled widely in India—as far east as Assam and as far south as Tamil Nadu—and even took an Indian name, Mahayanadeva.

Despite his intellectual attainments, Hsuan Tsang was fascinated by relics and miracles. Near present-day Jalalabad, Afghanistan, he went out of his way to view the pur-

ported relics of the Buddha—the top of his skull, his eyeball, and walking-stick—and paid a handsome sum for the privilege. He also underwent considerable hardships to visit a cave in which the devout were said to be able to see the Buddha's shadow miraculously cast upon the wall.

There is much in his biography that strains credibility. He never loses a debate, and more often than not his defeated opponents immediately convert to Mahayana Buddhism.

On one occasion, we are told, he was captured by a gang of river pirates on the Ganges near Kanpur. They were worshippers of Durga, and it was their custom to sacrifice a handsome young man every year. Hsuan Tsang was a good-looking young fellow, so they decided to sacrifice him. He asked for a few moments to pray, and promptly went into a trance.

Then a miracle occurred: a great wind arose; the waves of the Ganges mounted up and swamped the pirates' boats, moored on the shore. The terrified pirates brought Hsuan Tsang out of his trance and apologised. Hsuan Tsang was never at a loss for words, and he took advantage of the occasion to deliver a sermon on the evils of piracy. The pirates thereupon threw their weapons into the river, renounced piracy forever, and converted to Buddhism.

Eventually Hsuan Tsang decided to return to China, but at this point he learned his first lesson in the perils of royal patronage. Kumara, the king of Assam, and Harsha, the king of Kanyakubja, both wanted him to visit them. Hsuan Tsang was staying at Nalanda at the time, and Kumara threatened to pound the city to dust if the Chinese monk were not sent to him. Hsuan Tsang therefore considered it prudent to postpone his return to China and go to Assam, where the king accorded him a royal welcome. Harsha, meanwhile, was not

happy with this, and the two kings got into a quarrel before Kumara finally gave in and sent Hsuan Tsang to Harsha.

Harsha treated Hsuan Tsang with even greater respect than Kumara, and threw himself at the monk's feet at their first meeting. They discussed philosophy; Harsha was thrilled with admiration for Hsuan Tsang's learning. He arranged a great debate between Hsuan Tsang and the Hinayanists, which Hsuan Tsang won, as usual. And although Hsuan Tsang by now was impatient to leave for China, the demands of kings are not easily evaded, and Harsha prevailed upon him to accompany him to Prayag, the modern Allahabad, for a great almsgiving that lasted 75 days.

Despite the importunities of both kings to remain with them longer, Hsuan Tsang finally managed to break away and begin his return journey. This time he was not travelling light. Beal tells us that he carried 500 grains of relics belonging to the body of the Buddha; six statues of the Buddha, made of gold, silver, and sandalwood; 124 Mahayana sutras; and 520 other works, carried by 22 horses. In addition, Harsha presented him with a large sum of money and a huge elephant, fully 30 feet high, capable of carrying all of Hsuan Tsang's luggage and eight people besides. The disadvantage of such a magnificent vehicle was that it consumed 40 bundles of hay and over 20 pounds of buns per day.

Hsuan Tsang retraced his steps through northwestern India, but while he was crossing the Indus on his elephant, a storm came up. The baggage was being carried in a ferry-boat, and some 50 sets of scriptures were washed overboard. He waited two months for replacements to arrive, then crossed the Hindu Kush—much like Hannibal crossing the Alps, one supposes, except that Hsuan Tsang had only one elephant. But he did have a retinue

**... a great wind
arose; the waves of
the Ganges
mounted up and
swamped the
pirates' boats,
moored on the
shore ...**

of seven monks, 20 porters, 10 mules, and four horses. It took them 18 days to make the crossing, struggling upward through the ice and snow, crossing frozen rivers on snow bridges, and dismounting whenever the trail got too steep.

Arriving at Kunduz, in northern Afghanistan, Hsuan Tsang's little caravan headed eastward up the Oxus and into the Pamirs. But eventually the elephant went berserk, plunged into a river, and drowned. No doubt it had had enough of ice, snow, and inhospitable mountain ranges.

After crossing the Pamirs, Hsuan Tsang got as far north as Kashgar, in present-day Sinkiang, before veering southward to skirt the lower edges of the Gobi. He proceeded to Khotan and northward to Tunhuang. When he finally reached Chang-an, in 645 AD, his fame had preceded him: crowds thronged the streets to see him, and even the Emperor welcomed him. His triumphal procession into the city was in marked contrast to his furtive departure 16 years earlier.

Hsuan Tsang was still a relatively youthful 43, and he resolved to spend the rest of his life translating the scriptures he had brought back. These were all written in Sanskrit, and had to be rendered into Chinese.

But success exacts its own penalties, and now he learned his second lesson in the perils of royal patronage. The Emperor, Tai Tsung, wanted to make him an administrator, a request which Hsuan Tsang managed to decline diplomatically. Then the Emperor wanted Hsuan Tsang to accompany him on a military expedition, but the latter begged off on the grounds that he was a monk. Since he was an object of popular curiosity, he wanted to do his translating at a remote monastery; but he was obliged to accede to the Emperor's wish that he do it at a place closer to home, the Hung-fu Monastery in Chang-an.

During the next 19 years, Hsuan Tsang and a group of assistants translated 1335 sutras, including the massive body of Prajna-

paramita literature. His version of the latter, said to be 84 times the length of the Bible, ultimately filled 600 volumes. But his work was hampered by the fact that the Emperor had taken a liking to him and wanted to keep him near by. In 648 the Emperor moved him into the palace and took up a good deal of his time chatting with him, mostly on religious topics.

It was not until Tai Tsung died in 649 that Hsuan Tsang was able to devote his full attention to translating his beloved scriptures; and even then there were distractions. He was obliged to translate diplomatic documents — and even the *Tao Te Ching* — into Sanskrit. The latter task cannot have pleased him, as the Buddhists and the Taoists were constantly at loggerheads.

Mr Waley tells us that the quality of Hsuan Tsang's translations has been questioned. One critic claims that his version of at least one scripture is careless and inaccurate, and contains many additions that are not in the original text. Mr Waley himself says that Hsuan Tsang's renderings are too literal, and require more and better annotation. But it should be noted that some of his translations are still read by Chinese Buddhists today. The standard version of the Heart Sutra, for instance, probably the most important text in the entire Prajnaparamita canon, was translated by Hsuan Tsang.

He died in 664 AD at the age of 62. In evaluating his life, one must be careful not to place him in the category of most travellers, who are motivated by nothing more profound than an abiding curiosity to see what's over the next hill. Hsuan Tsang had that, of course; but he belongs in a more epic league, for his journey was essentially a quest. He belongs in the tradition of Jason and Odysseus, of Aeneas and Columbus. And since his quest was religious in nature, it may be most accurate to place him in the category of those Arthurian knights who went forth in search of the Holy Grail. □

A Noble Service to Humanity

DR KABITA CHATTERJEE

Swami Vivekananda says: 'Tapas and the other hard Yogas that were practised in other Yugas do not work now. What is needed in this Yuga is giving, helping others.' Blood donation is one of the most important ways of helping others. Here's an article about the need for donating blood from a veteran in the field of blood donation. Dr Kabita Chatterjee is Chief Medical Officer, Blood Bank, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

What is blood? Blood is a fluid tissue which carries essentials like oxygen, carbon dioxide, and digested food matter from one part of the body to the other. Each ml of blood contains about 5 million red blood cells, 4,000 to 11,000 white blood cells, and 1.5 to 400,000 platelets suspended in a pale yellow fluid called plasma. The red blood cells carry oxygen and carbon dioxide, and have a life span of 7 hours to a few days. Platelets assist the blood to clot in a wound and have a life of 5 days. The plasma as it circulates in the blood vessels carries the cells as well as many other chemical substances and nutrients to all parts of the body.

What is blood donation? Normally the human body has a reserve of blood in various organs, which can move out without doing any harm to the body. Hence if a small amount of blood is drawn out of the human body in a scientific way, the process is known as blood donation. Out of the seven to eight litres of blood present in the body, only 350 to 450 ml is drawn out in one setting. This volume is replaced within 24 hours by the body. As such any normal, healthy individual can donate one unit of blood safely once in every 3 to 4 months.

Who all can donate blood? Any healthy person of either sex, between the age group of 18 and 60 years, of body weight of more than 45 kg, and with a haemoglobin content above 12.5 gm/dl can donate blood. However, pregnant and lactating women cannot donate blood.

Voluntary blood donors are those who donate blood on their own, and receive no money or any other form of payment. Their primary motivation is to help some unknown recipient. They donate blood regularly to help blood banks maintain an adequate supply of blood. They are likely to respond to any sort of emergency calls and are free from transfusion-transmitted illness like hepatitis, HIV, VDRL and malaria. They are aware of the importance of safe blood, and know the rule: 'Protect yourself and others'; 'others' may be their own near and dear ones. Without voluntary blood donations, no transfusion service can ensure supply of good quality blood in right quantities and at the right time.

Donate blood and save life. We can hold on to our high ethical and moral values as also our care for the sick by donating our own blood. Blood donation is one of the greatest services to humankind as it is reflected by the end result. A blood donor is donating something that is essential to him to another person who may be absolutely unknown to him. This is the beauty of this selfless service. Please note the following points:

1. Donate blood regularly to a licensed blood bank.
2. Receive blood only from a licensed blood bank.
3. Make sure that the blood is screened for all the diseases transmitted through blood.
4. Do not accept a blood transfusion unless absolutely necessary. □

RELIGION AND LIFE

Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The questions and answers being serialized in these columns are not meant to be scholarly expositions of various issues. People from different walks of life used to meet Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj daily during his tenure as President of the Ramakrishna Order, and discuss with him their problems and doubts; and Revered Maharaj would clear their doubts in a characteristically simple way. These questions and answers were recorded and read out to him before he approved them all for publication.

What is Sāṃkhya?

Sāṃkhya comes from *saṃkhyā*. *Sam*, that is, 'perfectly'; *khyā*, that is, 'to know', to know the Reality or Truth perfectly. According to the followers of Sāṃkhya, the *tattva* or reality or philosophy is called *sāṃkhya*.

What are the catur-vimśati tattvas?

By *catur-vimśati tattvas* the twenty-four cosmic principles are meant. According to the Sāṃkhya philosophy, by this the materials of creation are meant. In the *Tattva-samāsa* [1-3], it is said: 'Aṣṭo prakṛtayaḥ ṣoḍaśa vikārāḥ puruṣaḥ.' *Mahat*, *buddhi*, *ahamkāra* and the five *tanmātras*—these are the eight *prakṛtis*. The five organs of action (*karmendriyas*), the five sense organs (*jñānendriyas*), the five elements (*mahābhūtas*), the mind, and the eight *prakṛtis* go to form the 24 cosmic principles or *catur-vimśati tattvas*. *Tattva* means the fundamental elements of the universe.

Maharaj, what is adhyāsa?

To superimpose the qualities or *dharma*s of one thing on another is called *adhyāsa*. Or to see something which is not there is called *adhyāsa*. It is like seeing a piece of rope and saying that there is a snake. But there is no snake there. Though there is no snake, I am seeing the snake. This is *adhyāsa*.

We hear so much about superimposing a snake on the rope. But we confuse a rope for a snake only because there is a snake. Is it not?

You see, there is no snake at all where you confuse rope for snake. Even though you see a rope as a snake, there is no snake there—let

there be a thousand snakes elsewhere. The universe has no existence though we see it as the universe.

If what we are seeing is not the universe, what is it then?

Brahman! There is a rope, and you are superimposing a snake upon it. Similarly you are superimposing the universe on Brahman.

What is suṣupti?

When the mind stops functioning naturally, it is called the state of *suṣupti*. They say the mind is without function in that state.

Maharaj, what is the Veda?

Veda is the ocean of eternal knowledge.

What do the Vedas teach?

The Vedas primarily teach you about your true nature.

You can see a conglomeration of different kinds of thoughts in the Vedas. But the uniqueness of Vedic thought is this: it tells us that the Reality is one and It is manifesting as the universe and *jīvas*. So Brahman resides within every *jīva* or individual soul as that fundamental Reality. This is the speciality of the Vedas. The Vedas also contain numerous rituals and sacrifices; these are useful to sadhakas at different stages of their evolution. In fact, you will find everything—*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* ideals—in the Vedas. Whatever suits your temperament, that you can accept and follow.

In the Vedas there is mention of many gods and goddesses. Again, it is said there: '*Ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti*, Truth is one,

sages call it by different names.' In the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* there is a remarkable statement. How many gods are there? 'Thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three.' Again, how many gods are there? 'Three thousand three hundred and thirty-three.' In this way, it comes to one alone.

Maharaj, is the Gītā also a Veda?

No, it is not. God incarnated and broadcast the eternal Vedic truths through the *Gītā*. These truths are called *smṛti* and not Veda.

Is the idea of smaraṇa, manana, and nididhyāsana found in the Vedas?

Oh yes, it is! The Self is 'to be heard about, thought about, and meditated upon, *śrotavyo, mantavyo, nididhyāsitavyaḥ*.' You must hear about the Ātman, think and cogitate about it, and then contemplate on it.

In the Gītā, Bhagavan Sri Krishna says that he has created everything through his māyā. Is such an idea there in the Vedas too?

Yes, it is. '*Indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa iyate*, Indra appears to have numerous forms owing to *māyā*' [*Rg Veda*, 6.47.18]. In the Vedas, it is said: 'I am Manu, I am Sūrya,' and so on. Much of the Vedas is lost. We must check to see if any statement is against the Vedas.

Sri Krishna says that he makes every soul perform action. If so, why is each individual different from the other?

He may be making each one of us act in a different way. It is all his sport. God is like a little child; as Sri Ramakrishna says, he does not give to one even though the latter begs, but gives to one who does not want it. He is beyond all rules; he is not bound by any condition.

In the Gītā, Krishna tells Arjuna to fight. Again, he says that one should give up everything and surrender wholly to him. Why has he said two different things?

At the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Krishna teaches Arjuna: '*Klaibyaṁ mā sma ga-*

maḥ, Do not yield to unmanliness.' Arjuna has developed a fear that he may lose the battle. Krishna wants Arjuna to give it up and fight. A warrior's duty is to fight. By sincerely performing the duties of his class, if his mind gets transformed, then he has no action to perform. If he continues in this way and does not feel that he is the doer, then alone can he go beyond the pale of work.

*Na hi deha-bhṛtā śakyam
tyaktum karmāṇyaśeṣataḥ;
Yastu karma-phala-tyāgi
sa tyāgītyabhidhīyate.*

—*Gītā*, 18.11

There are various stages: initially he asks you to perform your duties; to perform them with great earnestness. Then comes a time when you will have to go beyond the pale of duties. Then there will be no duties for you. When you have renounced all duties, Krishna asks you to surrender yourself completely to him.

*Sarva-dharmān parityajya
māmekam śaraṇam vraja;
Aham tvā sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣaiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*

—*Gītā*, 18.66

He who feels, even after performing selfless actions, that he is not the doer is the real doer. He has nothing to perform from then on.

The animal has no duty to perform—it eats, roams about, and follows its instincts. But the human being is a much higher being. While performing actions, if he becomes established in the truth of unselfishness he goes beyond all work. Just by sitting silently you do not become a renouncer of actions. You renounce all actions only when the idea that you are not the doer becomes rooted firmly in your mind.

—Compiled by *Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar*

Consciousness and Superconsciousness

DR LETA JANE LEWIS

What will happen when we die? Will we be annihilated? Or is there something permanent within us? If yes, how to know it? All these questions are beautifully dealt with by a very experienced scholar, Dr Leta Jane Lewis. Dr Lewis is a professor emerita from California State University, USA, and the author of The Ultimate Love Affair: A Vedanta Handbook.

My friend made a very profound statement one day. He said, 'The one thing we can be sure of is our consciousness.' Because of consciousness we know that we exist. As Swami Vivekananda succinctly put it, 'This is the first act of consciousness—I am.'¹ Without consciousness we would have no knowledge of our mental, physical, and spiritual selves; we would have no knowledge of the external world in which we live and function; our senses would be useless and we would be incapable of the simplest thought. Swami Shraddhananda makes a beautiful comparison: 'Consciousness can be compared to light because like light it reveals things.'² Death frightens us because we fear that with the cessation of vital activity we will lose consciousness and face total annihilation.

Western psychology identifies consciousness with the mind, but Indian psychology distinguishes consciousness from the mind. Indian psychologists believe that the mind belongs to the material order of things while consciousness does not. Swami Prabhavananda writes regarding some Western philosophers: 'Consciousness according to the materialists is the product of a process.' In other words, they think that consciousness is somehow dependent on the body and must

cease when the body dies. But the Swami continues:

The [Western] idealist [like the Western psychologists], believes that consciousness is the property of the mind. ... So we must conclude that if the mind ceases to be conscious it must therefore cease to exist. ... Modern scientists would seem inclined to reject both these hypotheses and to accept the fact that consciousness is present throughout the universe, even though its presence may escape detection by scientific methods. In this they approach the viewpoint of Vedanta.³

Patanjali, India's revered expert on the art of concentration, teaches that it is possible actually to experience pure consciousness as separate from our minds. To do so, he explains, we must clear the mind of all activity. When the *chitta* (the mind stuff) is quieted—when the camera is turned off—all that remains is the screen upon which our thoughts are projected. That screen, as we have already observed, is pure consciousness.

According to Swami Shraddhananda's analogy, the light of consciousness like the light of the sun illumines all things. When the sun's light illumines objects, we do not see the sun itself. We must look away from those objects in order to see the sun. Similarly, we cannot experience pure consciousness while focusing our minds on the thoughts and feelings which it reveals to us.

Now it is important to note that one can-

1. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 32. [Hereafter *Complete Works*.]

2. Swami Shraddhananda, *Seeing God Everywhere* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1997), p. 126.

3. Swami Prabhavananda, *Religion in Practice* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1965), pp. 151-2.

not clear the mind of the thoughts obscuring pure consciousness simply by attempting to make it a blank. The fact that nature abhors a vacuum is doubly true of the human mind. As soon as one thought is dispensed with, another will rise to take its place.

When we ordinary mortals consider the possibility of pure consciousness without an object, we are frightened by the prospect of losing the awareness of body and mind with which we identify ourselves. To us such a loss would mean total extinction.

The Buddhist nirvana is such a condition in which there is no awareness of thoughts or sensations. The Buddha taught that one can escape life's ubiquitous suffering by entering into nirvana. But because the Buddha did not affirm (he also did not deny) the existence of an immortal Self, some people have feared that nirvana is merely annihilation. However, Professor Abraham Kaplan, who was the distinguished chairman of the philosophy department of UCLA during the fifties, made a very rational suggestion. He reasoned that if nirvana were annihilation, the Buddha would have taught his followers to commit suicide in order to escape suffering. But he didn't. Instead he recommended that they follow the *Dhammapada*, the path of righteous living, in order to attain peace in nirvana.

But sages in other philosophies and religions who have experienced pure consciousness state themselves more clearly. They stress that the very psycho/physical identifications, to which we cling as if our lives depended upon them, actually prevent our experiencing it.

Since pure consciousness is independent of the body and the mind, it is beyond suffering and, of course, cannot be subject to dissolution. We are always safe even when the body grows cold. Our problem is that we don't know this. Only those saints and sages who have experienced pure consciousness know that they are immortal. They assure us that, since we are made of the same stuff as they, we share in their immortality.

But in spite of their assurances, we ordinary mortals remain frightened by the prospect of death. The sages explain, however, that we won't lose consciousness even with the death of the body. We will leave the physical body in a fine body which retains the memory of our various lives and preserves our personal tendencies. We will be incarnated according to our natures and will face birth and death, happiness and suffering, over and over again until we finally reach Self-knowledge. Westerners are relieved by the possibility of personal continuation, but Easterners are wary of a system that exposes the individual to further suffering.

Pure consciousness has various epithets depending upon the way we think of it. Since it has none of the finite qualities that we are used to, the sages call it *superconsciousness* or *satchidananda*, divine or absolute existence, consciousness, and bliss. When they think of the divine consciousness within the individual, the sages call it the *Atman*. And when they think of it as existing everywhere within the universe, they call it *Brahman*. Since pure consciousness is one, the Atman (in us) and Brahman (everywhere) are identical. Your consciousness and mine are not different. Actually, there is no yours and mine; there is only the one divine consciousness and bliss; we might call it 'ours.'

Being without limiting attributes, superconsciousness is infinite in all respects. It has no geographical or temporal boundaries; that is, it is not restricted in time and place. There is no time or place where consciousness is not, so it stands to reason that it must exist in the tiniest unit in nature. Scientists have been delving ever deeper into the atom, but they have not found its core. If it were possible to detect absolute—that is, immaterial—existence with our physical instruments, we would find superconsciousness at the atom's depth. It is this consciousness, this existence, in the heart of the atom that, according to Indian thought, gives the impetus to evolution. As Swami Vivekananda comments: 'The theory

of evolution...is the foundation of almost all the Indian schools of thought.⁴ Swami Prabhavananda explains:

According to the Hindu theory of evolution, nothing is super-added in the course of evolution, but what is potentially existing becomes unfolded. The whole of the tree potentially exists in the seed. ... In the illumined seer...we see that infinite consciousness infinitely expressed....⁵

The purpose of evolution is, thus, the gradual raising of consciousness in nature until Self-realization is reached.⁶

In the Upanishads we read: 'From joy springs this universe, in joy dwells this universe, unto joy goes back this universe.'⁷ We are that joy, but we do not experience it to the fullest. But as Swami Prabhavananda writes: 'Brahman is existence, and we all know that we exist. In this sense everyone of us has an intuitive knowledge of the inner Self.'⁸ We suffer as a consequence of not knowing the peace and joy of the inner Self. Fortunately, however, we can overcome that spiritual ignorance by gradually raising our level of consciousness until we reach superconsciousness.⁹

In reality, superconsciousness and con-

sciousness raising are the essence of all great religions and spiritual philosophies. Whether we know it or not, consciousness raising in order to reach superconsciousness is the purpose of all spiritual disciplines, of all worship and dedication, everywhere, in all religions.

And what about Vedanta? How does it fit into the picture? The word *Vedanta* is composed of two words: *Veda* and *anta*, which together mean the end of the *Vedas*. *Vedanta* is another name for the Upanishads, which occur at the end of the *Vedas* and set forth Vedanta's philosophy. The Upanishads are not necessarily involved with any specific religion, but they can form the philosophical basis of any religion. Vedantists aren't necessarily Hindus. They aren't necessarily Christians or Buddhists or Moslems or followers of any specific religion. But the loyal follower of any one of these or any other religion can be a Vedantist. At the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, Swami Vivekananda expressed the goal of Vedanta, that Hindus should become better Hindus, Christians better Christians, and Buddhists better Buddhists.¹⁰ It should be added that atheists and agnostics who live pure, unselfish lives may be engaged in consciousness raising without realizing it.

In the Upanishads—and often in the same Upanishad—three approaches to consciousness raising are presented. First comes dualism. Those who worship God or any divine being are dualists. Among the dualists are those who worship Christ, Krishna, and the Buddha or (as the Moslems do) simply God. Then there are the qualified non-dualists

4. *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 519.

5. *Religion in Practice*, pp. 60-1.

6. The West has also had its ideas of evolution in which natural selection and the survival of the fittest play no part. It is interesting that as recently as the eighteenth century, Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling developed a theory of evolution very similar to the Indian theory. He regarded evolution as the gradual manifestation of consciousness from inert matter through the plant and animal kingdoms.

7. *The Upanishads*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1957), p. 59.

8. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1968), pp. 286-7.

9. The idea of consciousness raising was quite the rage during and for a few years after the hippy period. One fine lady told me that she was prettying up her front yard in order to raise the consciousness level on her street! But although cleanliness and aesthetics are always beneficial to spiritual aspirants, consciousness raising to reach superconsciousness demands disciplines of a much more serious nature.

10. See *Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 14.

who have raised their consciousness a little higher. In addition to worshipping God, they have discovered that we live, move, and have our being in God, that we depend on God for our very existence. We live in God but are distinct from him/her as the eggs in a pregnant fish depend upon the fish for their life but, nevertheless, are distinct from the fish. And, finally, there are the non-dualists who have attained superconsciousness. Like Jesus when he said, 'I and the Father are one,' they have learned that the Atman and Brahman are one, that the higher Self, our real self, and the divine existence are identical. But how to reconcile these three? If one is correct, aren't the others wrong? Not necessarily so.

Swami Vivekananda elucidates with a pertinent analogy. Suppose someone were on a rocket ship travelling towards the sun. At first, the sun would appear to be a lovely round orb, giving warmth and light. Halfway to the sun, it would be scorching hot and shooting off rays in all directions. And if the impossible became possible and he was still alive when he finally drew close to the sun, he would be overwhelmed by its heat and brilliance. The sun would now appear to be quite different from the sun he had seen earlier.

Although we may want to go to heaven or escape bad karma, religion appeals to us primarily because we intuitively sense the divine consciousness in all the great teachers and prophets. We feel an instinctive affinity with them and, whether we live by them or not, we appreciate their commandments. Jesus summarized these with his two great commandments: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.' If we could do that fully, we would be living in the superconsciousness right now.

But following those two apparently simple commandments is no easy task. Consider the rich young man who came to Jesus for instruction. When Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and follow him, he turned sadly away. He didn't love God enough to give up

his wealth. Now, we aren't asked to sell our possessions and live in devastating poverty. But we should realize that if we treasure them too highly and continually want more, we will forget God. Fortunately, Jesus wouldn't ask us to become perfect overnight.

Aspirants' spiritual lives frequently proceed according to the states of consciousness described in the Upanishads. First, they become dualists devoted to the spiritual ideal to which they are most attracted. Then as their devotion becomes deeper it infuses their lives. They begin to experience a divine presence as did Brother Lawrence, whose practice of the presence of God was a type of spontaneous worship.

As the dualist worshippers' consciousness continues to rise and expand, they become qualified non-dualists experiencing their beloved ideals as the divine consciousness pervading and sustaining everything that exists. Although the qualified non-dualist sees himself and the universe permeated with divinity, he realizes that God is both immanent and transcendent. A significant poetical passage from the Upanishads expresses the qualified non-dualistic vision:

Thou art the fire, Thou art the sun,
 Thou art the air, Thou art the moon,
 Thou art the starry firmament,
 Thou art Brahman Supreme:
 Thou art the waters—thou,
 The creator of all!
 Thou art woman, thou art man,
 Thou art the youth, Thou art the maiden,
 Thou art the old man tottering with his staff;
 Thou facest everywhere. ...
 Thou art the thundercloud,
 the seasons, the seas.
 Without beginning art Thou,
 Beyond time, beyond space.
 Filled with Brahman are the things we see;
 Filled with Brahman are the things we see not;
 From out of Brahman all—
 yet is He still the same.¹¹

11. *The Upanishads*, pp. 123-4.

What a perfectly marvellous vision of the universe—everything permeated with God's divine essence! This type of vision probably inspired Saint Francis to talk to the birds and to his brother and sister, the sun and the moon.

Devotion and spiritual practices which enable them to concentrate one-pointedly on divinity enable the qualified non-dualists to raise their consciousness to a very high level. Thus they become ready for the non-dualistic vision, which is unadulterated superconsciousness. In this state they do not simply *experience* divine bliss, fulfilment, and unalloyed existence. As Swami Prabhavananda so beautifully explained, they *are* divine bliss, fulfilment, and unalloyed existence. There is nothing to wish for and nothing to worry about.

Ordinarily persons in superconscious bliss are not attracted to life in the body. They leave it and forget it. But those with a keen desire to help others achieve what they have achieved return to physical consciousness and thought. They know that they are not identical with the bodies they appear to inhabit. They see the world before them, but it is transfigured. The material world has become a divine world. Since the non-dual state is one of perfect identity, the realized person knows that he and his brother are one in the ultimate divine existence. Then why should I love my brother?

Swami Prabhavananda presents the reason:

One who has had the transcendental experience looks upon the relative universe with a calm, penetrating eye; for, though one sees multiplicity and relativity...yet one glimpses behind the relativity and the multiplicity the one, immutable, blissful Brahman [the divine superconsciousness]. It is then, affirms the Gita, that one discovers a love for all one's fellows and nourishes the will to do them good.¹²

12. *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, p. 111.

Some spiritual aspirants attain realization by discriminating between the eternal and the ephemeral and rejecting the latter. Sri Ramakrishna describes what happens:

The jnani...is like the man who, climbing a stairway, leaves each step behind, one after another, and so reaches the roof. But the vijnani, who gains an intimate knowledge of Brahman, has his consciousness further extended. He knows that the roof and steps are all of the same substance. First he realizes, 'All is not, God is.' Next he realizes, 'All is God.'—Those who reach samadhi [superconsciousness]...soon return to the normal plane of consciousness, and then they realize that he has become everything. They then see God in the heart of all.¹³

The person who sees divinity in humanity and worships it there is the ideal of Ramakrishna Vedanta.

But what about ordinary devotees, who are not yet illumined? Their goal is to intensify their intuition by appropriate spiritual practices. One of these practices is meditation.

We usually think of meditation as being done with one's eyes closed. But seeing divinity with one's eyes open and concentrating on it in the world may also be considered a type of meditation. This type of meditation has the advantage that one can engage in it anywhere, at any hour of the day. If one sincerely tries to concentrate in this way, concentration will be easier when one closes one's eyes to meditate on one's specific ideal two or three times a day.

Devotees can begin by thinking of divinity in the temple of the human heart and worshipping it there as well as in the physical temple, church, or mosque. For as Swami Vivekananda put it, 'After so much Tapasya [austerity] I have understood this as the highest truth: He is present in every being.'¹⁴ □

13. *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, p. 47.

14. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), p. 734.

Meditations on Madhu Vidyā

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

We are serializing these meditations, based on Swami Shraddhanandaji Maharaj's talks on Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (Chapter 2), compiled by Archana (Mary Anna Tamraz).

We have till now studied eight meditations. These meditations help us to understand and finally realize the ultimate Truth.

THE NINTH MEDITATION

अयं स्तनयितुः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्य स्तनयितुः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्मिन्स्तनयितुस्तत्र तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं शब्दः सौवरस्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥२.५.९॥

This cloud is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this cloud. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this cloud, and the intelligent immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

Thunder is a cosmic event, and that is not altogether useless. From the clouds we get rain. From rain comes everything—food, water, life. But sometimes we hear the thundering sound along with the rain. Living beings have a relation of harmony and joy even with this thunder. In the human being also there is the counterpart of thunder.

THE TENTH MEDITATION

अयमाकाशः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्याकाशस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्मिन्नाकाशे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं हृद्याकाशस्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥२.५.१०॥

This ether is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this ether. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this ether,

and the intelligent immortal being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

From any point in this little universe called the human body you can reach the Self; that is the wonderful idea of the Upaniṣad. In this microcosm, you can go through your ear, your head, your eyes, etc to reach the Self. That immortal principle which is really within you, your existence, your knowledge, can be found by meditating on anything. That is the unifying principle behind, that is *madhu*, that is the real joy and freedom in existence. That is the soul, that is Brahman.

We next come to a subtler idea. We shall consider the meditation on the moral order, dharma.

THE ELEVENTH MEDITATION

अयं धर्मः सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु, अस्य धर्मस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु; यश्चायमस्मिन्धर्मे तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, यश्चायमध्यात्मं धर्मस्तेजोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः, अयमेव स सोऽयमात्मा; इदममृतं, इदं ब्रह्म, इदं सर्वम् ॥२.५.११॥

This law is honey for all beings, and all beings are honey for this law. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this law, and the intelligent, immortal, being, the soul in the individual being—each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul in each; He indeed is the Self in all. He is all.

Dharma is translated as righteousness or law. But the idea of dharma is much more comprehensive. Righteousness, beauty, law, etc are only aspects of dharma. The Sanskrit root of dharma is *dhr*, 'to hold'. That which

'holds' is dharma. '*Dhāraṇāt dharma iti*, That which sustains is called dharma.' That which it 'holds' may be a material object or some psychological object or even some religious principle. But all have some essential quality: that essential quality is dharma.

There is a system of philosophy called the Vaiśeṣika system. The Nyāya system is logic, and the Vaiśeṣika is close to Nyāya. The Vaiśeṣika system analyses this whole universe bit by bit and tries to establish a philosophy. It's a pluralistic philosophy and not monistic like the Vedānta. In this philosophy definitions have been given very accurately. What is the dharma of water, for instance? The dharma of water is to flow. The dharma of fire is to burn. If it has no mobility you don't call it water, you may call it ice. So there are certain essential qualities, dharmas. These dharmas make us say that something is a rock, something is a tree, etc.

In our mind we have certain set ideas about things and objects. Suppose you go to a doctor. You pay him 25 dollars. You want him to diagnose your case. He feels your pulse, strokes your head, and says: 'Come next time.' What sort of a doctor is he? The doctor hasn't done his dharma. So with regard to persons and things. We have certain set ideas which are their essential qualities. Those qualities are the dharmas. We expect, for example, a woman to exhibit womanly qualities. If she doesn't do so, we think: 'What sort of a woman is this?'

We expect certain qualities to be present in everything: flowers, fruits, trees, rivers, oceans, etc. The whole universe is thus associated with dharma. This dharma is called the law of nature. It is the law guiding all of nature. You can see dharma, therefore, as law. It is this law that guides the inanimate objects, the animal kingdom, and everything else. There is an order in which all things function.

When we come to the moral order, we call it righteousness. In the case of us human beings there are laws: between mother and child, between father and son, between

brother and sister. If the mother doesn't take care of her children, becomes an alcoholic, and if the father runs away, we say there is no dharma in such a house.

So with business. If you go to a shop and want to buy something and if the shopkeeper cheats you, you will have no confidence in the shopkeeper anymore. If people lose their dharma everywhere, there will be chaos.

So it is dharma that is maintaining the order of the family, of the State, of the world. If there was no righteousness there would be only greed and animosity, arrogance and conflict, and unrest and wars. See what happened during the Second World War. There was no dharma—only aggression, greed, and hence, suffering.

So the moral order—the subtle law that works to shape things—is righteousness. Each man and woman, and each nation, is consciousness of their respective dharmas. And if everyone maintained their respective dharmas there would be peace. Since dharma goes there is imbalance, no equilibrium. However, it is difficult to define dharma. What should be the wife's dharma? What should be the husband's dharma? What should be the businessman's dharma? All these are difficult to define. In ancient India, the unselfish sages prescribed specific dharmas. So there were many books called *dharma-śāstras*. People had great faith in them. When there would be a conflict, people would consult them. In other cultures also, like the Chinese, there were such law books. Confucius did not speak much of God but he spoke of the dharma of man. In every culture there are teachings on dharma apart from the spiritual teachings. Spiritual teachings relate to man's spiritual life. When a man tries to rise above the limitations of his body, mind, desires, involvements, etc, he wants to rise to a level where there are no mental passions or weaknesses or the fear of death even. That is the level of the Spirit, the level of God. That level is called the level of Self-knowledge. That stage is called the stage of *mokṣa* in the Indian tradition.

Mokṣa is liberation. *Mokṣa* is one thing and dharma is another. Dharma leads to *mokṣa*. If a person is true to his dharma, that is the preparation for higher search—the search for the Spirit. But if there is no dharma, then the ground is shaky. So dharma is vital.

In the mantra we are studying, it says that dharma is honey to all beings. The natural law or moral law is necessary in life. If this dharma were to be absent, then all beings would be in chaos. Since there is this law, the sun shines, the birds sing, the animals breathe. If some day the sun says that it won't respect dharma, the world would be in a chaos. That is why dharma is honey to all beings.

The mantra next says that this dharma has a soul. That is the essential spiritual outlook of these paragraphs. Everything is centred round the universal consciousness, the spiritual Reality, the Soul of everything. So dharma too has a universal characteristic, a soul, a spiritual Personality. That is the infinite Self.

The mantra says further: **This law is honey for all beings. And all beings are honey for this law. The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of the law....** Here dharma is given a personality. In India, ideas were given a concrete shape. Initially there was the idea, then came the concrete shape.

It's something like this: Scientists discover the laws. What are the properties of sugar? What are the properties of carbon dioxide? What are the properties of carbon monoxide? These properties are their essential qualities. Then comes the generalization. The

essential quality which is manifesting in so many diverse ways is given a personality. Then it becomes dharma. Then the artists come, the sculptors come, the devotees come. They give a concrete shape to these qualities. That becomes a god. So did the infinite Reality become God in India. Coming down, when God is manifesting in so many ways, he can manifest as dharma also.

Thus this dharma is given a concrete form, a soul here. This great power of unification, of maintenance, of sustaining things and objects has a soul.

The intelligent, immortal being, the soul of this law, and the intelligent, immortal being, the soul in the individual being—which may be either a man or an animal or even something else. There is a mutual relationship between dharma and man or individual soul. And that relationship is that of joy and friendship. Their union brings joy. And this union is coming from the underlying Reality: **Each is honey to the other. Brahman is the soul of each; he indeed is the Self in all. He is all.**

In this way, an abstract moral principle or power, which is holding all beings, and human beings have a mutual relationship. You need not be afraid of dharma. You can have a worshipful attitude towards it. Then the relation becomes sweet, *madhu*. The relation is really possible because the underlying Reality is one.

Next month we shall take up a little terse mantra about *satya*. □

The Language of the Vedas and Upanishads

You know some of those Riks where creation is described; the very heights of expression of the sublime in expansion and the infinite in space are attained. But they found out very soon that the Infinite cannot be reached in that way...and so they fell back upon other explanations. The language became new in the Upanishads; it is almost negative, it is sometimes chaotic, sometimes taking you beyond the senses, pointing out to you something which you cannot grasp...and at the same time you feel certain that it is there.

—Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda's Love for Everyone

N. GOPINATH

The author presents a simple pen-picture of Swami Vivekananda's love for everyone and highlights those events where Swamiji embraced some of his brother disciples and disciples.

Swami Vivekananda's heart was broad enough to embrace the whole of humanity. He himself remarked once that he would get into a sort of ecstasy sometimes and feel that he must bless everyone and everything; that he must embrace everything.

Swami Brahmananda

Amongst the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the boy Rakhal (who later became Swami Brahmananda) was one of the first to come to Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji would call Rakhal 'Raja'. When the Ramakrishna Mission was founded in May 1897, Swami Brahmananda became its first president. Swami Vivekananda, who wanted things to go on in a great speed, would grow impatient occasionally. He would not spare Brahmananda too from scolding. But he would cool down the next moment and embrace him and say: 'Raja, who else should I scold but you? I have nobody but you. You and I don't need this Math or these worldly activities, but what will happen to those who are coming to Him? So swallow my rebukes....'

Swami Shivananda

Taraknath Ghoshal (later Swami Shivananda) was senior to Swami Vivekananda by age. Shivanandaji succeeded Swami Brahmananda as the president of the Ramakrishna Order in 1922, and was in this sacred office till his *mahasamadhi* in 1934.

During Sri Ramakrishna's final illness, Tarak and the others stayed with him at the Cossipore garden house and served him. Those were the days when the disciples were all burning with intense renunciation. Reminiscing about those days, Swami Shivananda

said in later days that the disciples would discuss Buddhist philosophy. Swami Vivekananda was versed in Buddhism and would hold arguments with his brother disciples. It was during such a period that Narendranath and Taraknath went to Bodh Gaya, telling none about it. 'There we sat for meditation under the Bodhi tree. We became quite absorbed in meditation. Suddenly Swamiji burst into tears. In a state of spiritual ecstasy he embraced me. I was seated by his side. Later, he came down to the natural plane and became absorbed in deep meditation again. Next day, I asked Swamiji about this matter. He replied: "I felt a deep pang in my heart. Everything here is as it was before. Here, in Bodh Gaya, we have the Buddha's ideas in an intensified form. His renunciation, great compassion, and deep spirituality, all these are here; but where is he, the living embodiment of those ideas and ideals? I so keenly felt the absence of Lord Buddha that I could not control myself. That is why I burst into tears and embraced you." The few days we spent in Bodh Gaya we were in a very blissful mood.'

Alasinga Perumal

Alasinga Perumal was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, whose untiring efforts contributed to a great extent in Swamiji's going to America in 1893 to participate in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago.

Alasinga Perumal was born in Chikmagalur, Karnataka, in 1865. Getting his BA degree from Madras Christian College, he became a high school teacher at Kumbakonam. Later, in 1887 he became an assistant teacher in Pachiappa High School and soon, by twenty-five, became headmaster of the school.

Alasinga met Swamiji for the first time in 1893 at Manmathanath Bhattacharya's house. In order to send his guru to America, Alasinga went from door to door to beg money. About him, Swamiji himself said: 'One rarely finds men like our Alasinga in this world—one so unselfish, so hard-working and devoted to his guru, and such an obedient disciple is indeed very rare on earth.'

When Swamiji sailed to America from Bombay on 31 May 1893, Alasinga, who had accompanied Swamiji, too boarded the steamer *SS Peninsular*. With tears in his eyes, he prostrated full length at the holy feet of Swamiji. Swamiji too, with great love and tearful eyes, embraced Alasinga. Swamiji wrote numerous letters to Alasinga, and those that are available are treasures of knowledge.

Govinda Chetty

In 1893, when arrangements were being made in Madras for Swamiji's journey, one day he dreamt that his mother had passed away and became anxious. Alasinga Perumal and Manmathanath Bhattacharya took him to a person by name Govinda Chetty, who, it is said, had some control over ghosts. Chetty relieved Swamiji of his anxiety by assuring him that his mother was alive. Upon his return from the West, Swamiji noticed Govinda Chetty in the crowd at Kumbakonam and asked him to meet him later. When Chetty came, Swamiji said: 'I know you have psychic powers. They have also given you money and honour; but from the spiritual point of view are you not where you started? Has your mind progressed towards God?' The man replied in the negative. Swamiji embraced Govinda Chetty. To everyone's surprise, Chetty's psychic powers disappeared from that day, and in their place came the tremendous hankering for God. As a result, the former ghost-charmer renounced the world.

A Muslim Fakir

During the 1890s Swamiji and Swami Akhandanandaji were wandering monks. Once both walked from Nainital towards Badrikashram. They were both terribly tired and

while they were near Almora, they were fully exhausted. They sat down to rest on the path, opposite to a Muslim cemetery. Swamiji was so exhausted that he almost fainted. At the cemetery, there lived a Muslim caretaker, a fakir by name Zulfikar Ali. He chanced to see Swamiji in that helpless condition and came to him with a cucumber. He had only that to offer. To his surprise, Swami Vivekananda asked the fakir to himself put the cucumber into his mouth, as he had no energy left to move his hand even. Eating it and feeling refreshed by the fakir's affection, Swamiji thought that that man saved his life.

In 1897, when Swamiji returned to Almora, he was taken in a grand procession. He spotted the Muslim fakir standing at a distance. Seeing him, Swamiji instantly alighted from the carriage and approached the fakir. He embraced the fakir. In the public speech that followed, Swamiji said: 'I owe my life to a Muslim fakir of Almora, whom I had the fortune to see and greet after seven years.'

Motilal Bose

Motilal Bose was Swami Vivekananda's childhood friend. When Swamiji came to Lahore in 1898, Sri Bose was the owner of a circus company there. One day, he came to see Swamiji. His dilemma was, how to address Swamiji. Everyone was bowing low and paying respects to Swamiji. He asked Swamiji: 'How am I to address you—"Naren" or "Swamiji"?' At once Swamiji replied that he was his same Naren. So saying, he embraced his friend.

There are many other incidents, known and unknown, where Swami Vivekananda expressed his divine love for his disciples, brother disciples, and others. As he himself wrote in 1890 to Sri Yajneswar Bhattacharya: 'Try to love anybody and everybody. Be a *man* and try to make those immediately under your care...brave, moral, and sympathising. No religion for you, my children, but morality and bravery. No cowardice, no sin, no crime, no weakness—the rest will come of itself.' □

An Ocean of Devotion

His 'help me' cries must have reverberated all over the jungle. But no one had come to help him. It was the sixth day. His voice had become weak. He himself had become terribly worn out. He was sinking slowly.

He almost fainted, but managed to keep himself steady. Tears rolled down his cheeks. 'How helpless I am,' he thought. His shameful helplessness made him terribly unhappy. 'Where have all my capacities gone now? So many people were enamoured of my capacity to foretell the future! Where has all that gone? Where has my capacity to sing and to compose poems gone now? Where are they who had sung my praises?'

At that moment, he realized what helplessness really is. Suddenly something happened. As if awakened from a long slumber, he woke up from his small world. He understood his folly. 'Whom am I calling for help? Who will help me in this world? What a fool I have been all my life, depending upon people!' He shuddered at his folly and wept.

Yes, he had been a great poet. He was proud he belonged to Chandra Bardāi's lineage. He was proud that his father sang at the court of the Mughals. He had dreamt of being a court musician of the Mughals. He was proud of his astrological abilities. But fate had given several blows to him and his family. Yet, had he understood there was no one in this world for him?

His brothers had died one after another, all at the hands of the enemy. The shock had become unbearable to the family. He had seen his parents weep bitterly over the death of his six brothers. At last, he was left alone. Some strange disease snatched away his vision too. That had been a bolt from the blue. Even then he hadn't realized his helplessness. At last, when the world's beauty had meant nothing

to him, when everyone called him blind, he had stepped out of his house for good. He had walked and walked. While walking, he had fallen into this well.

Now he realized his fate. Here he was, helplessly lying inside a deep well, blind and weak, waiting for death to come any moment. How helpless human beings are! In spite of all our so-called prowess and abilities, we are nothing. Who will save us but God?

He began to sing Krishna's songs. How heart-rending they were! He cried as he sang. The songs welled from the depths of his heart. And Krishna heard them. He came and lifted his devotee like he does a sweet little flower.

Within moments, the blind man realized that he had been saved out of the well and was in the wide expanse of the earth. He realized that he was free. 'How are you?' asked a melodious voice. The voice touched the very core of his heart. He said: 'My lord! I know it is you! I understand your mercy. I know it is you who have given up the throne of heaven and come to save me.' Krishna smiled and asked his devotee: 'Shall I restore your eyesight?' The devotee said: 'What shall I need but your vision always? I don't want to see this world again, my Krishna. May I see you in my heart always. That's all I need.' The Lord was pleased. He entered his devotee's heart which was vacant now since his ego had left him.

Sūradās was transformed. He thought of settling down there itself. Miracles happen by the hundreds in the case of devotees. There was a hut nearby, and Krishna led his devotee to that hut. Next to the hut was a beautiful pond. There were also many trees, bearing sweet fruits all round the year. Sūradās began to spend his time there. His heart was always seeing the Lord. His mind was full of Krishna. And the songs that came forth were all like

huge waves in the ocean of bhakti.

Years passed. Rains and dry seasons came and went. Sūradās now felt that he should visit the Lord's place, Vrindāban. He slowly walked towards Vrindāban. And who led him by the hand? It was his dear Krishna, unseen by anyone, who led his blind devotee towards his abode of joy. At Vrindāban, Sūradās met Vallabhāchārya. Vallabha had heard about Sūradās. He wished to hear songs from him. When he heard them, Vallabha was moved to tears. Sūradās said: 'But my mind still doesn't have peace. There is a void still, even though Sri Krishna has blessed me in numerous ways. What shall I do?' Vallabha divined the cause of Sūradās' unrest. He said: 'That lacuna is there because Krishna wants you to do some work. You must have heard of the great Tulasīdās? He lives in Benares. He is a great saint and has written the life of Sri Rāma in the common language. Lord Krishna wishes that you should write His *līlā* in the common language now.' 'But,' cried Sūradās, 'I don't know anything! And I am getting old!' Vallabha laughed. 'You are not even 40! And Krishna resides in your heart! What other qualification do you need? Anyway, I shall narrate the 10th *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata* to you.' Sūradās begged him for a mantra. Vallabha hesitated for a moment but soon, inspired by Krishna, he gave him the mantra.

According to Vallabha's instructions, Sūradās entered the Srināthji temple, and remained there till his work was completed. He would sing and someone would write down the poems. People would gather by the hundreds everyday to listen to Sūradās. Sūradās composed a hundred thousand poems in all—all about Krishna in various moods. There are poems on love, on separation, on helplessness, on paternal devotion, on servitude—the list is endless. Sūradās too enjoyed his stay at Srināthji temple. Day after day he rendered wholehearted service to the Lord.

Akbar, the emperor of Delhi, heard of Sūradās' fame. He came all the way from Delhi to Vrindāban with his entourage. Sūradās was

impressed with the goodness of Akbar. He sang a few songs in praise of Krishna. Akbar said: 'You have sung the praises of a cowherd. Now sing the praises of the emperor of Delhi.' Sūradās politely said: 'I don't sing the praises of any mortal, O King!' The emperor wasn't angry. He was only testing the saint. Before leaving, Akbar proposed to donate some villages to Sūradās for his upkeep. Sūradās humbly said: 'The Lord is providing everything to this blind devotee. What shall I do with villages?' Akbar insisted: 'In your old age you will need someone to look after you!' 'No, sir, no! The Lord will never forsake me, and I know that.' The emperor was immensely pleased. He asked his minister to copy a few of the poems of Sūradās before leaving.

One day, someone announced: 'O holy sir! None other than the great Tulasīdāsji has come to meet you!' Sūradās sprang up from his seat. The two saints embraced each other for a long time. Both had had the visions of their chosen deities a number of times. Both had sung the praises of the Lord all their lives. Their meeting was like the sweet communion of two oceans of devotion.

After *Sursāgar* was completed, one day Sūradās announced that he would leave the temple for good. He was carried to the spot where Krishna had played the *rāsālīlā* with the gopis. Sūradās lay down on a cot and went on looking towards the flag that flew at the top of Srināthji temple. Vallabha's son and heir to the Pushti-Mārga-pontiff seat, Viṭṭhala, who had come to perform *ārati* to Srinathji, understood that the last moments had come. He announced: 'The biggest boat of Pushti Mārga is leaving soon for Gokuladhām. Whoever wants to seek his blessings may come soon.' When they all arrived, Sūradās got up and sat on the cot. He sang a final song and said: 'My mind and soul are full of Rādhā now. I am going to a place now where there is no separation from the Beloved, *jahan nahin prem-vi-yog*.'

Born in 1478 near Delhi, Sūradās lived a full hundred years according to legends. □

Book Reviews

AYURVEDA REVOLUTIONIZED — INTEGRATING ANCIENT AND MODERN AYURVEDA: By Edward F. Tarabilda. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007. 1998. Pp. 204. Rs.195.

Ayurveda is now the focus of attention in terms of different approaches which are not necessarily medical. Its holistic structure is attracting many of the Western analysts who, as in other disciplines, are looking for insights representing the totality of life. As David Frawley in his Foreword puts it, 'Readers are now being introduced into the deeper aspects of this extraordinary system that covers the whole of life. More complex books are coming out that expand the basic knowledge of Ayurveda in various directions.'

This is certainly welcome since even readers interested in interior life can appreciate the implications of this system as part of a totalizing sacred tradition. Apart from his evident grounding in Ayurveda, the author of this book is also well-versed in Vedic Astrology. Thus, the blending of *ijyotisa* and Ayurveda as interfaces of a complex system of healing is the uniqueness of this book. One may not, of course, agree that the book is revolutionizing, as the title says, but it is certainly refreshing to lift Ayurveda from mere concern for longevity.

Much of the book is concerned with the traditional components of Ayurveda. In these areas there is clarity but not much of an evidence for Vedic basis. Perhaps the last chapter seems to be refreshing. Even here, there is not much of emphasis on the Vedic insights. For instance, when the author says, 'Holistic living is the art of engaging in each field in a balanced and integrated way,' one looks for greater and more insightful analysis of what is meant by a balanced and integrated way. Similarly, some of the suggestions made to reduce stress in terms of the physical locales conducive to this are, for me at least, far from viable. Tarabilda is right when he says that 'The ancient Vedic science dealt with stress primarily through the science of geomancy,' or *sthāpatya*, but the problem is how many urban dwellers have a choice to plan a house which is conducive to create 'a relatively stress-free environment which is conducive to mental health'? The author himself is aware of this but does not suggest any workable way out. Perhaps affluent

society creates comfort which itself is achieved at a high cost. Ayurveda does not seem to have been examined from the point of view of the growth of cities. If the changed milieu is not taken into account, revolutionizing plans remain blueprints on sterilized paper.

Ayurveda is very much in the news, but like all news, sensational statements replace hard facts. Even living in a temple with its radiant vibrations the body may be subjected to cancer. Thus, the entire problem needs to take into account and grapple with the orientations of perfect health. In this regard, the book seeks to break fresh ground only to come up with the harsh truth that the ground is intractable.

Dr M. Sivaramkrishna

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OFFICE YOGA: By Julie Friedeberger. Published by Motilal Banarsidass. 1998. Pp. 155. Rs.175.

'Office Yoga,' says the author, 'is a survival handbook for the desk-bound; the practical manual of simple movements which you can do a few minutes at a time throughout the day, to relieve the tension and stress of sedentary working life.' The book lives up to its description and presents viable exercises that help the cooped up office person to establish physical alertness. Consisting of nine chapters, the book has also a reading list which shows that this is not one of those pseudo-yoga books which promise more than they actually deliver. Obviously, the author sees all these exercises as integral components of meditation and other spiritual disciplines.

I find the explanation clear and practical, taking into account such factors as time and the space available in an average office. Chapter Eight, 'Using This Book Throughout Your Day,' sums up the range of exercises in addition to suggesting suitable exercises for specific situations, 'and to help in emergencies.' The function is to develop these exercises as 'a safety valve that releases a little bit of steam at intervals to prevent an eventual explosion.'

The book is not only practical but eminently readable, qualities which can only come from authentic experience. As such, Julie Friedeberger—herself a practitioner for twenty years—gives

us a book that is invaluable. I do hope that readers could go beyond the physical aspects and deepen and intensify their interior being. Such reader-friendly books are always welcome.

The publishers ought to be thanked for bringing out the Indian edition, published originally from London.

Dr M. Sivaramkrishna

**THE SUPREME WISDOM OF THE
UPANIŠADS: AN INTRODUCTION: By Klaus
G. Witz. Published by Motilal Banarsidass. 1998. Pp. xxv+558. Rs.700.**

The Vedas are four in number, each consisting of four parts: *saṃhitā*, *brāhmaṇa*, *āranyaka* and *upaniṣad*. The Vedas take us step by step to the final realization of the Self in the Upaniṣads.

The author's purpose is to provide an introduction to the supreme wisdom of the Upaniṣads. The supreme Upaniṣadic wisdom lies in teaching the oneness of the individual Self (*jīvātman*) with the supreme Self (*Paramātman*). The author rightly emphasizes that such a realization should not be merely abstract or meditative: it should be actualized in one's daily life—in the daily experience of one's true nature as the Self of all.

The Upaniṣads do not merely set forth wisdom. They also dwell on the *vidyās* or paths through which man can strive to attain the Truth. It is because of the combination of the supreme end—knowledge of the Reality—and the means—the *vidyās*—that the Upaniṣads have been called 'the highest human knowledge (*erkenntnis*) and wisdom' and 'the greatest present of the century' by Schopenhauer. 'It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death,' he exclaimed.

There is no doubt that except for a feeling such as the one expressed by Schopenhauer, Klaus Witz would not have switched to Sanskrit Upaniṣadic studies. Klaus Witz, who earned his PhD in mathematics at an American university and served as associate professor of mathematics at the University of Illinois, is a German by birth and has studied the Upaniṣads at the same university as that of Schopenhauer, and has produced this wonderful book. 'The book was written,' says Witz, 'with the conviction that the Upaniṣads have the capability to uplift mankind today, and that they desperately need to be made available to a wider western-oriented audience' (p. vii). Klaus Witz hopes that the Upaniṣadic ideal of *erkenntnis* would provide the needed corrective to the western worldview upon which the whole mentality of science in the West is based. As without purity of heart, attained through Upaniṣadic *vidyās*, the individual cannot attain ful-

filment in the sense of realization of Brahman, so without moral-ethical purification of the whole mentality of science, science cannot achieve the uplift of mankind, says Klaus Witz.

'If the Upaniṣadic wisdom is to take deeper roots in the West, then it must be shown in detail how this wisdom emerges from the texts' (p. ix). This statement gives an inkling into the method used by the author in his study. The book is in the format of a text and commentary. The author focuses on the texts themselves, giving his understanding or interpretation of the meaning which the individual texts have in terms of spiritual life. In arriving at his interpretation, he takes into consideration the traditional views of the text such as those of the *Brahma Sūtras* and Sankara's commentaries, as also the view of great modern spiritual figures such as Ramana Maharshi and Satya Sai Baba. He also uses parallel texts as and when they are relevant. The author's facility with three languages—German, English and Sanskrit—makes it possible for him to draw and synthesize a large amount of material from a variety of sources.

Divided into six chapters, the first sets the tone of discussion by providing a 'background' of the Upaniṣads. The second focuses on the transcendental impact of two sections of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. With the Yajñavalkya-Maitreyi dialogue (Chapter 2) giving readers an initial idea of the Self, the author takes us to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Puruṣa, the all-encompassing and transcendent 'Person', and of meditation on 'sense powers' and deities in the third and fourth chapters respectively. Chapters 5 and 6 constitute the core of the book. They deal with the supreme wisdom of the Upaniṣads by giving a comprehensive treatment of concepts like *viññāna* ('higher transcendental awareness'), *ānanda* ('higher bliss'), 'space in the heart' and 'merger into Brahman', and of *vidyās* such as *antar-jyotiṣ-vidyā* and *dahara-vidyā* which involve meditation and lead to the highest realization.

All the interpretations given by the author to the Upaniṣadic teachings and *vidyās* may not be equally acceptable to Indian scholars and spiritual masters, but the author's dedication, devotion and enthusiasm are very touching indeed, particularly his plea that we take the Upaniṣadic truths seriously and make efforts to live them in our daily life.

I wish that this book of wisdom—beautifully printed—be a worthy possession of all serious-minded persons as also of research libraries.

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SUREŚVARA'S VĀRTTIKA ON KHILA KĀṆDA: Edited, translated and annotated by K.P. Jog and Shoun Hino. Motilal Banarsidass. 1998. Pp. 244+xx.

This volume has a Preface, *Śrīmukham*, by the private secretary to Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya of Sringeri, and a Foreword by Hajime Nakamura. Sureśvara, the disciple of Śaṅkara, wrote the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad-bhāṣya-tīkā*, clarifying his guru's position. It is interesting to note that the *vārttika* reveals Sureśvara's discussion on what is said (*ukta*), what is not said (*anukta*), and what is not properly said (*durukta*) in Śaṅkara's writings. Sureśvara was well versed in Nyāya and Mimāṃsa systems. Professor Nakamura in his Foreword has drawn our attention to Sureśvara's general philosophical contribution, and also to the various means of knowing (*pramāṇa-vyavahāra*) in Vedānta.

In their Introduction, the translators have pointed out the purpose of the 'Khila Kāṇḍa' in the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* as pointed out by Śaṅkara. This portion discusses those topics which were not discussed earlier, eg, the specific results of worship, meditation on the vital force (*prāṇa*), etc.

The translators feel that Chapters 5 and 6 of this Upaniṣad deal with various meditations and worships, leading to liberation indirectly as they help us in purifying our minds. It is very interesting to note that the different parts of the body like the heart, mind, the fire in the stomach (*vaiśvānarāgni*) and *prāṇa* which is accepted as most shining are worshipped. This worship is described as the means to human prosperity, which ultimately leads one to liberation (*prakṛṣṭābhyudayārthāni kramamuktikarāṇi ca*, 5.1.5). At the end of the 6th chapter there are some *gṛhya* and *dharma sūtras* which are connected with a man's pursuit of *kāma*, an individual's attitude towards women, etc.

This worship is described as the means to human prosperity (mundane) which ultimately leads one to liberation. The first 50 verses give an excellent interpretation of the Upaniṣadic mantra *Pūṇamadaḥ* etc by different interpreters as well as by Sureśvara. Brahman, though having the nature of duality and non-duality, exists as *pūrṇa* as the *pūrṇa* Brahman does not have any division (*dvaitādvaitātmakam brahma pūrṇatvenāvibhāgataḥ —kārikā 5.1.48*). This interpretation is given by Bhāṭṭi-prapañca. To him the state of duality is found only at the time of *mahāpralaya*. This duality may be seen as ripples on the ocean—*samudrormivad-ikṣyatām* (*kārikā 5.1.50*).

This view is refuted by the argument *tattu yuktā na yujyate* (*kārikā 5.1.63*). Sureśvara thinks that duality and non-duality cannot stay in one and the

same object at a time due to their contradiction like light and darkness (*paraspara-virodhācca naikadaikatra sambhavaḥ —kārikā 5.1.69*). As Brahman has one and the same nature, there is no possibility of variety or differences in Him.

The second part of Chapter 5 gives an account of the nature of restraint (*dama*) etc as means of worship, *damādinām sādhanatvaṁ vidhīyate* (*kārikā 5.2.1*).

The third part of the same chapter deals with the worship of Brahman endowed with limiting adjuncts (*sopādhika*). In fact, in the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta it is only *sopādhika* Brahman who is said to have the characteristics of the creator, protector and destroyer of this universe, known through the *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* called *jagajjanmādikāranatvaṁ* (see *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, 'Viśaya-pariccheda'). Brahman free from limiting adjuncts (*nirupādhika*) is known through its essential characteristics (*svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*) like *satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma*. It is not capable of being worshipped due to its *nirupādhika* nature. Had *nirupādhika* Brahman been capable of being worshipped, it would lose its character of *nirupādhikatvaṁ* due to its association with the *upādhī* called *pūjyatvaṁ* in it.

The 6th chapter also deals with the superiority of *prāṇa*, explanation of the paths *pitṛyāna*, *devayāna*, etc, as also of the deification of base instincts.

The translation has been done in a lucid language with some explanatory notes, which help in removing the ambiguity of the *kārikās* formulated by Sureśvara. This book should be treated as a precious treasure in Indian philosophical literature.

Very few typographical errors apart, the work is an excellent exposition of Sureśvara's work. It explores some excellent and novel derivative meanings of a few terms, like *ādambara*, for instance. This word means, here, 'continuous beating of a drum by two sticks (*dvikāṣṭha-samtata-āghātam*, 5.12.4). Through these various knotty issues, Advaita philosophy is highlighted in a very beautiful manner. At the end, we too may put a note like Sureśvara: 'Let this learning be tested by the knowers of the Veda who stand as touchstones of knowledge.'

A deeply philosophical work, excellently brought out by the publishers.

Dr Raghunath Ghosh

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Correction

The year of founding of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, has been wrongly mentioned as 1896 in the News and Reports column of our February issue (see 'Centenary of the Prophet's Visit'). The correct date is 1899. The error is regretted.

News and Reports

New Mission Centre

A branch of the Ramakrishna Mission has been started at Vijayawada under the name *Ramakrishna Mission, Vijayawada*, with the land, buildings, etc received from the Ramakrishna Samiti, Vijayawada. The address of the centre is: Ramakrishna Mission, Gandhi Nagar, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh 520003 (Phone: 0866-570799). The centre has a school, 4 km away, whose address is: Sri Ramakrishna Vidyalaya High School, Sitanagaram, Tadepalle Mandal, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh 522501 (Phone: 08645-72248).

Swami Shashikantanandaji has been appointed head of the centre.

New Centre for Human Excellence

Most Revered President Maharaj inaugurated the newly constructed Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence (for conducting the Study Circle for youths and the Bala Vikas Kendra for children) at Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, on 10 September 2000 in the presence of several monks and a large number of devotees. The public meeting held in the afternoon was presided over by the General Secretary, Sri N. Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and Sri G.M.C. Balayogi, Speaker of Lok Sabha, addressed the meeting. This was followed by week-long conventions and cultural programmes. Dr C. Rangarajan, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, addressed the gathering on the concluding day on the 17th.

Gujarat Earthquake Relief

Immediately after the devastating earthquake hit Gujarat in January, the Ramakrishna Mission started extensive primary relief work. The following is a brief report of the work as on 28 February:

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, covered 170 villages of Kutch, Rajkot and Jamnagar districts benefiting more than 225,000 people belonging to 45,000 families. Besides conducting medical camps at Bhuj and surrounding areas, it distributed 117,985 food packets, 196,741 pouches/bottles of water, 7,110 plastic sheets, 8,769 plastic tents, 1,620 cement sheets, 32,107 blankets, 62 boxes of medicines, 200 bottles of blood, and enormous quantities of food and items of clothing. The Ashrama also supplied 11,000 kg of firewood for cremation in various places.

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir, Porbandar, worked in the districts of Porbandar, Jamnagar and Rajkot. Among other things, it distributed 2,202 food packets, 2,925 blankets, 1,095 quilts, 478 sweaters, 2,829 tents, 74 carpets (for use

in schools), 75 sets of utensils among thousands of victims. It also ran 4 free kitchens which served 800 persons two meals a day.

Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi, covered 22 villages of Surendranagar district where it distributed 3,200 food packets, 5,560 kg *khichdi*, 1,910 blankets, 25 tents, 660 tarpaulin sheets, and considerable amounts of foodstuff and garments.

The *Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters* despatched more than 20,000 blankets and 10,000 tarpaulin tents to its relief camp in Dhaneti and other places. Arrangements have been made to provide temporary shelters.

For the Mission's latest report on Gujarat Earthquake Relief, please visit our website at <http://www.sriramakrishna.org/gujarat.htm>.

Orissa Cyclone Rehabilitation

At Kanaguli village of Ersama block in Jagatsinghpur district 100 newly built cyclone-proof houses were handed over to the beneficiaries on 7 December 2000 by Swamis Shivamayanandaji, Vagishanandaji, Srikanandaji and Sri Sarveshwar Mohanty, Collector of Jagatsinghpur district. Another 80 houses were handed over to the villagers in January. Installation of 7 deep bore-wells and 7 shallow tube-wells has been completed.

On 6 December, Sri Surendranath Nayak, Minister, Panchayati Raj, Government of Orissa, and Swamis Shivamayanandaji and Vagishanandaji inaugurated respectively the newly constructed high school-cum-cyclone shelter, primary school-cum-cyclone shelter and middle school-cum-cyclone shelter at Kotang village in Puri district, constructed in collaboration with Ramakrishna Math, Puri. This was followed by a public meeting which was attended by several monks, devotees, government officials and a large number of villagers. Sports and elocution competitions for the local youth and cultural programmes were organized, more than 4,000 villagers were served food and 750 blankets were distributed among the cyclone-affected families belonging to 7 nearby villages.

Mission Tribal Welfare Work Honoured

In recognition of the contribution of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur, towards creating social awareness among the backward tribals of Abujmarh, Sri Ajit Jogi, Chief Minister of Chattisgarh, conferred the Martyr Vir Narayan Singh Award for 2000-01 on the Ashrama, at a function held in Sonakhan (the birthplace of martyr Vir Narayan) on 10 December 2000. The award carried a citation and a sum of two lakh rupees.